

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A FORECAST FACTORY

When we get radio reports of weather from all over the world will there be a mathematical weather forecast factory? After much labor to establish a system of weather forecasting by numerical process, L. F. Richardson gives us this fantasy of such a factory. "Imagine a large hall like a theater, except that the circles and galleries go right round through the space usually occupied by a stage. The walls of this chamber are painted to form a map of the globe. The ceiling represents the north polar regions, England is in the gallery, the tropics in the upper circle, Australia on the dress circle and the antarctic in the pit. A myriad computers are at work upon the weather of the part of the map where each sits, but each computer attends only to one equation or part of an equation. The work of each region is coordinated by an official of higher rank. Numerous little 'night signs' display the instantaneous values so that neighbouring computers can read them. Each number is thus displayed in three adjacent zones so as to maintain communication to the North and South on the map.

"Four senior clerks in the central pulpit are collecting the future weather as fast as it is being computed, and dispatching it by pneumatic carrier to a quiet room. There it will be coded and telephoned to the radio transmitting station.

"Messengers carry piles of used computing forms down to a storehouse in the cellar.

"In a neighbouring building there is a research department, where they invent improvements. In another building are all the usual financial, correspondence and administrative offices. Outside are playing fields, houses, mountains and lakes, for it is thought that those who compute the weather should breathe of it freely."

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