A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 26, 1927

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THE BIGGEST SCIENTIFIC JOB

In the number of people required to carry it on and the total amount of time consumed, the observing and recording of weather is probably the biggest of all scientific undertakings.

At the beginning of the present century it was estimated that there were 31,000 meteorological stations in operation throughout the world. The present number is doubtless much greater. At some of these stations observations have been taken regularly -- once, twice or three times a day, and even oftener in a few cases -- for 100 to 150 years. In round numbers one may say that, during the past few decades, meteorological observations have been made, the world over, at the rate of ten million a year, and the total number, since the keeping of regular weather records began, runs far up into the hundreds of millions.

In the United States alone there are something like 6,000 meteorological stations, at which upward of two and a quarter million observations are made every year. A large majority of weather observers, both in this country and abroad, receive no pay for their services.

A relatively small proportion of the weather observations made throughout the world are reported to central institutions by telegraph and utilized in the preparation of daily weather maps and forecasts. The bulk of them are assembled in a more leisurely way and serve as the raw material for climatic statistics. Indeed, the compiling of such statistics began long before any of the telegraphic weather services of today were established.

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