

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 16, 1928

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FORESTS AND CLIMATE

That forests exert far-reaching effects upon climate and that deforestation brings about striking climatic changes are twin theses that have had a host of champions, in and out of the scientific world, especially since the reckless felling of forests began in France in the days of the French Revolution. Among the extreme views that have been expressed on this subject is the notion that the clearing of forests in America has upset the climate of Europe, owing to the fact that storms from the west headed for the Old World now get a better start than they formerly did because they are no longer impeded by forests in sweeping over our country. This idea, like many others akin to it, ignores the great depth of the air currents involved in storms as compared with the height of a forest, and especially the enormous energy of storms and other large atmospheric movements in comparison with any influence a forest might be expected to have upon them by virtue of its conditions of temperature and moisture.

Since the great controversy over forest influences began meteorological stations have multiplied throughout the world, and in many places stations have been established for the special purpose of comparing conditions in the forest with those prevailing elsewhere. Thus the speculations of former times have been replaced by a good deal of definite information; yet the question of the climatic effects of forests remains, to some extent, an open one, with the tendency at present to regard these effects as not very different from those due to other kinds of vegetable cover.

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