

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt  
but intended for use  
June 20, 1928

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed June 13, 1928

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WHAT IS CLIMATE?

The word "climate" is one to which various meanings have been assigned in the past, and it is even now somewhat indefinite in its applications. It means literally "slope". The "climates" of the ancient Greek geographers were merely zones of latitude corresponding to successive increases of half an hour in the length of the longest day of the year, beginning at the equator, where the day is never more than 12 hours long.

The fact that these zones differed in their atmospheric conditions was recognized, but in ancient times and until quite recently conceptions of climate have been broad enough to include many things besides the state of the atmosphere. Old-fashioned medical works, for example, in describing the climate of a place, usually give information about the soil, the water and the prevalent diseases.

Nowadays scientific writers mean by the "climate" of a region its prevalent or characteristic weather, as known through several years' experience, with or without the aid of regular meteorological observations.

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