

Released on receipt
but intended for use
June 5, 1929

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 29, 1929

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DRY REGIONS OF EUROPE

Probably most people on this side of the Atlantic think of Europe as being almost everywhere blessed with an abundance of rain, as, indeed, many parts of it are. If, however, we take an average annual rainfall of 20 inches as the dividing line between sufficient and insufficient rain for successful agriculture without irrigation we shall find from a rainfall chart of Europe that the dry regions are quite extensive. Russia, with more than half its area dry, and Spain, with quite half dry, are the most drought-stricken countries in Europe; but many others, including Greece, Germany, Denmark, Poland, France, Roumania, Czechoslovakia and Austria, all contain dry areas, according to the criterion above mentioned. Even in the rainy British Isles there are a few spots, on the east coast, where the rainfall is slightly below 20 inches. The driest part of Europe is the east coast of Spain, with only from 4 to 8 inches of rain a year.

The most potent factor in the causation of these dry regions is position in the "rain shadow" of high ground -- the side sheltered from rain-bearing winds -- as is the case very conspicuously on the east coast of Spain; but flat coasts and islands, as in the Danish archipelago and on the Baltic coast of Germany, where there is not much tendency for the air currents to rise, are also likely to be rather dry, and so also are cold regions in the extreme north, where the air has a small capacity for water vapor.

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