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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THOSE WINTER PORTENTS

This month and next history will repeat itself and we shall read in the daily press many a report to the effect that, in one rural locality or another, the woodland creatures are wearing longer or shorter fur than usual, that chipmunks and squirrels have laid up more or fewer nuts than the average, that corn husks are abnormally thick or thin -- and so on -- leading up in each case to the prediction of a severe or mild winter. What we shall not read this side of the millennium is a dispatch like the following:

"Bear Creek, Me., Oct. 10.--Experts from the University of Blank have just completed their tenth annual series of measurements of fox furs in this township. Cross sections taken through several areas representing various types of topography, vegetative covering, etc., give a general average of 4.0 centimeters as the length of fur on the backs of adult foxes, which is about 0.3 centimeter below the average for the past decade," etc.

Neither is there the ghost of a chance that we shall learn how many nuts have been stored up by the average chipmunk in the environs of Podunk, N. J., as determined by a few hundred actual counts.

Nor shall we get any definite figures from anywhere about corn husks.

If we only had accurate data on such points as these, which we could correlate with meteorological records, we might be able to demonstrate (what we know anyhow) that all the old-fashioned biological signs of winter weather are pure and unadulterated bunk.

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