

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
February 19, 1930.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 12, 1930.

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

"CLERKS OF THE WEATHER"

"Give my compliments," says Dean Swift (writing in 1740) "to the Clerk of the Weather, and tell him we are all shamefully in a puzzle as to what season it can be. Here we are in the month of May, and the cold is like Nova Zembla."

From the above quotation it appears that people were quarreling with an imaginary "clerk of the weather" long before there was a real one, either in England or America. Since the establishment of an official meteorological service in Great Britain in 1854 the "clerk of the weather" has come to be more or less definitely identified with that service or with the official at the head of it; just as, in the United States, "Old Probabilities" used to mean either the Signal Service or the Chief Signal Officer.

The first head of the British service was Admiral Robert FitzRoy, who was appointed as "meteorological statist to the Board of Trade." The meteorological department of this board later became the Meteorological Office. FitzRoy committed suicide in 1865. Robert H. Scott took charge of the office in 1867 and served until 1900. He was succeeded by William N. (afterward Sir Napier) Shaw, who is now probably the world's most eminent meteorologist. Shaw retired in 1920. Since then Britain's "clerk of the weather" has been Dr. G.C. Simpson, who was attached for many years to the meteorological service of India and served as physicist with Captain Scott's last expedition in the Antarctic.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and B Sts.
Washington, D.C.