

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
December 9, 1930.

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 2, 1930.

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

EXPLAINING "UNUSUAL" WEATHER

At the present moment a popular scapegoat for anything that appears to be wrong with the weather is radio broadcasting. In the days of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers a favorite one was railroads; and there have been others.

Typical of the voluminous literature in which fantastic notions on this subject are embodied is a pamphlet published in London in 1879 by an author who signs himself "Observer." It is entitled "The Weather and Climatic Changes." The writer assumes -- but does not think it necessary to prove by quoting any sort of meteorological records -- that certain changes had taken place in British climate. These he ascribes in part to the increasing consumption of gas and coal, and in part to "the friction and displacement of the air caused by constant locomotion over 20,000 miles of railway." In support of his views he "would cite the comparatively unchanged character of the climate in the north of Scotland, where railways and gas only partially exist, and the humidity and enormous rainfall in Glasgow and neighborhood, where these influences are largely developed."

Other writers of the same period believed that the weather must be affected by the large quantity of water vapor supplied to the air by locomotives, while others thought that the spread of steel rails over the world influenced weather through disturbing the electrical state of the atmosphere. None of these theorizers, however, had the happy inspiration of placing actual weather statistics side by side with figures relating to railway development.

Of course the advent of railroads had just as much effect on weather as had the advent of radio -- absolutely none.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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