A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
February 9, 1931

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed February 2, 1931

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

EXPLORING CLIMATE

"Regional climatology," says Dr. R. J. Russell, "has advanced only in comparatively recent times beyond the recognition of 'klimata'; zones defined on the basis of the march of the sun's vertical ray north and south of the geographical equator. Parmenides of Elea, as early as 460 B. C., divided the earth into five belts - a zone of heat around the equator, two zones of cold around the poles, and two intermediate temperate zones 'where men might live.' The latitudinal boundaries of this ancient system have been superseded in modern climatology by lines separating climates on the basis of more rational criteria."

The climatic regions of the earth are now usually delimited on the basis of information concerning the outstanding features of temperature, rainfall, winds, etc., as obtained from long-continued observations at fixed meteorological stations. Since, however, such stations are widely and irregularly spaced, any detailed mapping of climate should be based in part upon field work, which consists of observing the distribution of climatic conditions as reflected in landscape, including soil, drainage, types of vegetation, etc.

Dr. Russell has spent part of each year for the past sixteen years in visiting and examining different portions of the dry-climate area of the western United States. The results of his personal observations combined with the climatic statistics of the Weather Bureau are embodied in a new chart, published by the University of California, showing the distribution of climatic types in that part of the world.

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21st and B Sts.
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