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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 6, 1931

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THE MEUSE VALLEY FOG

Though the scientific commission charged with the investigation of last December's "poison" fog in Belgium has not made a formal report, some of its findings are probably anticipated in an article recently published in the Manchester Guardian by Chairman Melland, of the British National Smoke Abatement Society, who visited Belgium and interviewed a member of the commission.

"As regards the cause of the tragedy," says Mr. Melland, "the outstanding point seems to be that in Liège, with its population of three quarters of a million, where the fog was also very dense, nothing abnormal happened. The fog was intense, but clean, for in Liège, as in most continental towns, there is practically no smoke. All the abnormal deaths occurred in the towns on the banks of the Meuse between Liège and Huy, a distance of about twenty miles. In this area there are probably sixty different kinds of industrial establishments, notably zinc and other foundries. Sulphur dioxide was given off by some of these processes; also hydrofluoric acid/^{and} probably small quantities of arsenic compounds. It is difficult to decide otherwise than that the gaseous fumes from the industrial chimneys imprisoned in the fog were mainly responsible for the casualties."

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