

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 11, 1931

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WEATHER SCIENCE AND WEATHER PREDICTION

Sir Napier Shaw, who for many years was director of the British Meteorological office, adverts in a recent book to the common misconception that "meteorology means forecasting the weather and nothing else." A sense of depression, he says, arises for some meteorologists from the question that their friends, without exception, ask on the mention of any new scientific advance in meteorology: "Will it be useful in forecasting?" He mentions the early history of weather prediction in England:

"When Admiral FitzRoy, overpowered by the glamour of a telegraphic synoptic map, published his anticipations of coming weather as forecasts in the newspapers, his colleagues of the Royal Society were shocked and gave expression to their feelings; so much so that, after FitzRoy's death in 1865, no forecasts were allowed." They were not resumed until 1879.

Today weather forecasting is generally admitted to be the most important function of meteorological institutions, yet a majority of the world's leading meteorologists have never made forecasts professionally. Meteorology, like other sciences, is a many-sided subject.

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