

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE OZONE MYTH

Ozone, a special kind of oxygen, now produced rather extensively by artificial methods for industrial and other uses, was, until half a century or so ago, supposed to be naturally present in greater or less abundance everywhere in the outdoor atmosphere except in some congested districts of large towns. On account of its powerful oxidizing properties this substance was regarded as Nature's great scavenger and hence as an all-important element of climate from a hygienic point of view. The air of forests, mountains and the seashore was thought to owe its bracing quality to the presence of ozone, and health resorts vied with one another in claims concerning its prevalence in their local atmospheres.

Today we know that we cannot fill our lungs with "life-giving ozone" when we visit a health resort, for the excellent reason that practically all of this gas normally contained in the atmosphere lies dozens of miles over our heads. It is now studied at long range with the aid of the spectroscope and the old test-papers and other paraphernalia for measuring ozone in the lower air - when it wasn't there - have gone to the scrap-heap or the museum.

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