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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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UNRELIABLE CLIMATIC RECORDS

The practical reason for compiling climatic statistics is that they may serve as a guide to future weather, but too much dependence should not be placed upon their prophetic accuracy. In a recent English book on climate, K. C. Edwards gives two illustrations of their unreliability:

"When Napoleon was preparing for his invasion of Russia towards the end of 1812, he requested the French astronomer Laplace to calculate when the bitter cold of winter would spread over that country. From the slender records at his disposal Laplace estimated that on the average severe cold did not occur until January. The emperor proceeded with his operations, but in December intense cold overtook his armies at Moscow, causing the memorable but disastrous retreat."

During the recent alarming illness of his majesty King George V it was decided, early in 1929, to remove the royal patient from the misty atmosphere of London to some residence on the south coast of England, where more genial climatic conditions might hasten his recovery. "Bognor, which on an average enjoys more sunshine during the winter than any other place in Britain, was selected for this purpose. For February, the first full month of the king's stay, the average duration of sunshine is 93 hours. Unfortunately during February of the year in question only 69 1/2 hours were recorded, but London received no more than 40 hours during that month."

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