

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

LONG DROUGHTS

Prof. Baldwin-Wiseman, of the University of Western Australia, has been making an extensive study of droughts in various parts of the world, utilizing data collected not only from regular rainfall records but also from historical chronicles, church, monastic, urban and manorial records, statistics of high and low waters, notes on mills and fisheries, records of the prices of grain, salt, fish, etc., and other material that throws light on the vagaries of weather antedating the institution of rain gauges. One interesting result of this study, which the investigator reports in the Engineering News-Record, is that in a good many cases droughts have persisted for long periods of years.

"Droughts lasting from 10 to 13 years, although fortunately not common, have occurred over extensive areas at various times in different parts of the world. Some of the longer rainfall records reveal deficiencies that have lasted for 30 years or more. In one case a period of deficiency lasted with very minor breaks for 31 years, the maximum deficiency of that period being equivalent to 2.2 years' average rainfall.

"There is a considerable store of information in the 848 years' continuous record of Nile floods on the Roda nilometer preserved by Arab historians, from which one deduces that there were single droughts lasting 13, 11 and 10 years, two droughts each of eight and seven years' duration, five droughts of six years' duration, and nine droughts of five years' duration."

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