

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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APRIL WEATHER

It is almost proverbial that proverbs are not to be trusted. April's proverbial reputation for fickle skies and frequent showers originated in Europe and was imported, along with a hodge-podge of other weather lore, into this country, but it appears to be rather ill-justified on both sides of the ocean.

A well-known meteorologist of the Old World, Dr. Wladimir Koeppen, once undertook to find out at what time of the year "April weather" is commonest in Germany. Such information is not obtainable directly from weather records as ordinarily published, but Koeppen found from an analysis of detailed statistics for the city of Magdeburg that days with frequent alternations of clouds and sunshine are commonest there in July and least common in December. He points out that we should expect this result from the fact that continuous sheets of cloud are typical of winter skies and detached masses of cloud--"woolpacks" and the like--of summer skies. April occupies an intermediate position between the two months above mentioned in the matter of "open-and-shut" weather.

As to rain, the same authority found that at Potsdam, where there are long records of the times of occurrence of rainfall day by day, showers are likewise most frequent in July; much more so than in April. Though no similar investigations have been carried out for other parts of the world, we have reason to believe that there are few places either in Europe or America where the type of weather traditionally ascribed to April is actually more common in that month than in any other.

Of course showery weather does not necessarily imply heavy rainfall, but there are doubtless many people who, having heard all their lives of "April showers," think of this month as the wettest of the year. There are, however, very few places on either side of the Atlantic whose rainfall records do not show a lower average for April than for some other month of the year.

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