

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed May 21, 1932

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CLIMATIC CHANGES

Climates are by no means so changeable as the majority of non-scientific people suppose, but on the other hand they are probably not quite so stable as most of the orthodox meteorologists believed a generation or so ago. Science has, of course, always recognized the fact that great climatic changes have occurred during the long past of which geology furnishes the record. The coal seams found in the Arctic and the Antarctic are the remains of luxuriant vegetation that flourished when those now frigid regions had a relatively mild climate. The earth had passed through at least four great Ice Ages and we are probably living in the declining stage of the latest one now. The changes of climate implied in such events are, however, exceedingly slow, requiring long ages for their accomplishment, and have nothing to do with the abrupt changes that so many people claim to have observed within their own lifetimes.

On the other hand many authorities believe that the weather shows a tendency to run through certain cycles - to be persistently somewhat colder or warmer, drier or wetter than the average during comparatively brief intervals of time - and that some of these cycles may be sufficiently pronounced to attract the attention of the layman and thus, to a certain extent, justify his assertion that "the climate has changed." If, however, he implies by this assertion that the change is a permanent one, he is wrong.

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