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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHAT IS CLIMATE?

The word "climate" is one to which various meanings have been assigned in the past, and it is even now quite indefinite in its applications. It means literally "slope." The climates of the ancient Greek geographers were merely zones of latitude, corresponding to successive increases of half an hour in the length of the longest day, beginning at the equator, where the day is never longer than twelve hours. The fact that these zones differed in their atmospheric conditions was recognized, but both ancient and modern conceptions of climate have, until quite recently, been broad enough to include many things besides the state of the atmosphere. Old-fashioned medical works, for example, in describing the climate of a place, usually give information concerning the soil, the water and the prevalent diseases.

Nowadays scientific writers mean by the climate of a region its prevalent or characteristic weather, as known through several years' experience, with or without the aid of regular meteorological observations. The word applies to the totality of weather rather than average weather. Thus the highest and lowest temperatures that have ever occurred at a place are properly included among the data of its climate. It applies also, as a rule, only to those elements of weather that affect animal and vegetable life.

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