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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 21, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

MATHEMATICAL WEATHER FORECASTS

It is a tantalizing thought that the weather of tomorrow depends entirely upon certain physical conditions existing today, so that, if we had a complete knowledge of the latter, it should, theoretically, be possible to make absolutely accurate weather predictions by a process of mathematical calculation, just as it is possible to predict mathematically the eclipses of the sun and moon. An attempt to forecast weather in this manner was actually made some years ago by the English meteorologist, L.F. Richardson. The prediction was limited to a particular part of Europe and to a particular date on which unusually complete upper-air data were available for this area.

The results were not successful, and Mr. Richardson estimated that, even if such results could be attained by his process, an army of 64,000 computers would be required to put it into operation throughout the world! The elaborate calculations he employed in this undertaking, as published in his book on the subject, are a mathematical curiosity, involving the use of so many symbols that it was necessary to draw on the Coptic alphabet for some of them.

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21st and Constitution Ave.
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