

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 9, 1932

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Authority on Meteorology.

THE LOWEST AIR TEMPERATURES

The lowest natural temperatures hitherto measured anywhere in the atmosphere were found by means of sounding-balloons many miles above the earth in low latitudes. A reading of 133 degrees Fahrenheit below zero was obtained at an uncertain altitude above Batavia, Java, Nov. 5, 1913, and one as low or a trifle lower ten miles above Agra, India, October 4, 1928.

When Archdeacon Stuck made his ascent of Mount McKinley, Alaska, in 1913, he left a minimum thermometer at a point 15,000 feet above sea level for the express purpose of finding out how cold the weather gets there. The instrument was enclosed in a small wooden case and fastened securely in a cleft of a rock. Last May this thermometer was recovered by another climbing party, who found the index down in the bulb, as far down as it could go, indicating the occurrence of a minimum temperature of at least 100 degrees below zero at some time during the 19 years the instrument lay on the mountain. The thermometer was an excellent one, but it is hard to say how much confidence should be put in its indications when left so long in an isolated spot; especially where high winds may have jarred the index away from its correct position.

The temperature indicated is not, however, an improbable one at that great altitude on a subarctic mountain slope. Dr. H.U. Sverdrup, the Norwegian meteorologist and polar authority, has recently published a calculation of the extreme temperatures likely to occur in winter on the lofty Greenland ice cap, and he thinks 130 degrees below zero is not impossible in that locality.

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