

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
December 30, 1932

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 23, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

"POISON" FOG OF LONG AGO

The so-called "poison" fog that prevailed in the valley of the Meuse, in Belgium, in December, 1930, causing much illness and the loss of 70 lives, was the worst event of the kind that has happened in that region, but by no means the only one. There have been several cases since the latter part of the last century, and one that occurred January 4, 1800, is described in the Annales de Chimie of that year by a French military pharmacist named Paissé. The scene of the early event was Maastricht, which is also in the Meuse valley and is now in Holland, but at that time was in France.

The fog of 1800 was very dense, had a disagreeable odor and hampered respiration. As these characteristics were as noticeable in the open country as in town, the French writer thought they could not be due to coal smoke. Fever, inflammation of the throat, loss of voice, headache and deafness were some of the symptoms of persons exposed to it, several of whom required hospital treatment.

The outbreak of illness attending the fog of 1930 has been attributed to an over-concentration in the air of sulfur dioxide gas from the chimneys of industrial plants. It would be interesting to know whether a similar explanation would fit the case of 1800.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.