

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 16, 1933

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FORECASTING FROM WEATHER MAPS

Scientific methods of weather prediction are based upon the discovery, dating back a little over a century, that the weather of any one locality is intimately connected with and dependent upon that of other localities, far and near. This is almost entirely a modern conception. Our ancestors generally thought of weather as a purely local affair, produced on the spot, and the old-fashioned weather prophet therefore believed he could foretell its coming vicissitudes in his own neighborhood by observing various "signs" within the limits of his own horizon.

Some of the traditional weather indications, within range of local observation, are not entirely without prognostic value, but they are far less instructive than those the modern forecaster observes on the face of a weather map. This bird's-eye view of the weather prevailing, at a given time, over a large portion of the earth always shows certain typical distributions of barometric pressure, winds, temperature, clouds and the like, which, in the light of past experience, may be expected to undergo typical evolutions; including, especially, progressive movements from place to place. That, in thumb-nail sketch, is the principle upon which weather is predicted from a "synchronous" weather chart.

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