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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed July 18, 1933

THE HOTTEST WEATHER

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A fact now well known though unsuspected a few generations ago is that the hottest weather on earth does not occur anywhere near the equator but is found, during the summer half-year, in the great desert areas that lie, partly in the temperate zones, near the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. In these areas, during a longer summer day than occurs in lower latitudes, a combination of clear skies, dry air and bare soil leads to an intense heating of the ground, and the latter, in turn, heats the air adjacent to it to excess.

Weather stations are too scarce in these deserts to give us more than random samples of atmospheric conditions. The highest individual reading of a shaded thermometer happens to have been made at a place 600 miles, and the next highest at one 900 miles, north of the Tropic of Cancer; but with the establishment of new stations it is entirely possible that still higher readings will be obtained inside the torrid zone, though certainly not very far inside. The present "highest on record" -- 136 degrees Fahrenheit -- was, however, observed in the north temperate zone; viz., at Azizia, Tripolitania, on September 13, 1922.

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