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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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NAPOLEON'S REPRIMAND

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Authority on Meteorology.

Lamarck, one of the greatest of French naturalists, was much interested in meteorology, and his undertakings in that field of science led to a humiliating experience. He was, unfortunately, a fervid disciple of Prof. Toaldo, of Padua, who taught that terrestrial weather is controlled by the movements and positions of the moon; a doctrine which, if it were sound, would make the long-range prediction of weather beautifully simple.

Lamarck published a series of meteorological yearbooks for the years 1800 to 1811, inclusive, and in each of these he announced the weather probabilities for the year. He thus became the target of much severe criticism on the part of his scientific contemporaries. One day at a meeting of the Institute, of which he was a member, the Emperor Napoleon was present. The emperor approached to speak to him, and Lamarck offered him a book.

"What's this?" exclaimed Napoleon. "It's your absurd meteorology -- the book in which you compete with Mathieu Laensberg" (a famous seventeenth century almanac-maker). "This yearbook dishonors your old age. Stick to natural history, and I will receive your works with pleasure. I take this book merely out of consideration for your gray hairs."

The emperor seized the volume and tossed it to an aide-de-camp. Lamarck tried to explain that the volume was not one of his meteorological yearbooks, but a work on natural history, and burst into tears.

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