

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
August 30, 1934

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed August 23, 1934

AN ALMOST RAINLESS LAND

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

The northern coast of Chile is perhaps the driest region on the globe. At the town of Iquique the rainfall averaged 0.05 inch a year during a period of 25 years, while at Arica, farther north, the annual average for 17 years was only 0.02 inch; a world record for dryness. Ordinarily the average yearly rainfall of a place computed from measurements made during a long period of years is regarded by meteorologists as the "normal" rainfall for the place in question; but in a desert intervals of months or years without any rain alternate with brief showers that may even be torrential; hence the average fluctuates widely with the length of record and there is no such thing as a "normal."

Dr. Isaiah Bowman, in his "Desert Trails of Atacama," writes of this coast: "The British consul at Iquique told me that he had advised some of his friends who were coming out from England not to bring umbrellas, for in the fourteen years he had then known the coast no rain had fallen," meaning, probably, none but a few rare sprinkles. "Yet on the night on which they disembarked from the steamer it was raining hard. In 1906 there was a three days' rain; a succession of light showers with intervals of heavy mist, which penetrated the houses and collected and ran off walls and ceilings and soaked the carpets and beds."

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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