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October 1, 1934

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed September 24, 1934

ORGANISMS IN THE AIR ALOFT

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The collection of microorganisms from the air at various altitudes is a perennial scientific task. One of the earliest workers in this field was Pasteur, who obtained his samples by climbing the Alps. Nowadays such investigations are usually made by means of airplane flights, many of which have been utilized for the purpose in recent years in the United States, Canada, Russia and elsewhere.

Beginning in February, 1932, collections were made in the course of 45 airplane flights conducted primarily for meteorological purposes near Boston by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a report of the results has been published by Prof. Bernard E. Proctor. The collections were made with apparatus designed for this investigation at various levels up to 20,600 feet. Bacteria and molds were found above 19,600 feet; yeasts and pollens above 16,000 feet.

"The height that is reached by some of these forms," writes Prof. Proctor, "induces speculation regarding their horizontal movements. If they can go up three or four miles in the air, it would seem likely that their travels in a horizontal plane might be almost limitless. Such considerations make it easy to understand how plant diseases may be transmitted through the travels of spores."

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