

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"THOSE WOOLLEN UNIFORMS"

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Meteorologists are perennially surprised at the way in which human undertakings in which climate plays a part are planned without regard to climatic statistics. The classic illustration -- perhaps apocryphal -- is that the equipment sent to Panama for digging the canal included a consignment of snow-shovels.

Military commanders have frequently ignored the recorded facts of climate, to their sorrow. At first sight, one may think that Sir William Birdwood was justified when, the other day, he claimed that the Italians had committed a blunder of this sort in sending troops to Africa clad in heavy woollen coats. Italy has, however, able climatologists to advise her, and they may have recommended just such apparel.

For it should be remembered that the appalling heat of the Ethiopian lowlands and of Italy's adjacent colonies does not prevail on the Ethiopian plateaux, to which the invaders hope to penetrate promptly. Addis Ababa, 8,000 feet above sea level, has recorded freezing weather and there are loftier inhabited regions in which night frosts are not uncommon. The greater part of Ethiopia has, because of its altitude, a temperate rather than a torrid climate.

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