

Worst Drought Sets Low Water Records

Meteorology

Rivers Famous For Floods Now Drying Up

NEW records for low water levels on the Mississippi and other mid-western rivers are being set as the worst drought in the history of the Weather Bureau continues to threaten crops. Rivers which were breaking records for height of water a year or so ago are now far below normal.

At St. Louis, for instance, the gages of the Weather Bureau show a height of only 3 feet, the lowest ever recorded at this time of year, according to M. W. Hayes, in charge of the work on rivers and floods. Normally, said Mr. Hayes, the level is something like 12 or 14 feet at the beginning of August. This height is measured

above the zero of the gage, which is set approximately at the lowest possible level.

All along the Mississippi River system low levels are being recorded, he said. At Davenport it is 2 feet 7 inches; at Memphis 4 feet 8 inches; at Cairo, 9 feet 7 inches; at Vicksburg, 8 feet 4 inches and at New Orleans, one foot three inches. At Kansas City the Missouri is 5 feet 8 inches and at Cincinnati the Ohio is 11 feet 8 inches.

Preliminary reports reaching the Weather Bureau show that this drought is the worst ever recorded, said J. B. Kincer, in charge of the Bureau's work on the relation between weather and crops. None of the Bureau's records show such a defi-

ciency of rainfall. Though the cool weather that has now come over the middle west will retard the deterioration of the crops, it will not help materially. What is needed is rain and none is in sight.

As indicating the severity of the drought, Mr. Kincer stated that the preliminary figures for July show that the lower Mississippi Valley had only a fifth of the normal rainfall during the month. The Ohio Valley has had only a third to a half of normal, the southern plains of Texas only a fifth to a quarter, and the northern plains a third to a half. During the early part of the year, the rainfall was also much less than normal and this has aggravated the situation.

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Smarter Hand

STUDENTS at Temple University, Philadelphia, are busy learning to twirl wands and perform other feats of dexterity in an effort to determine what difference there is in the rate of learning between the right and left hands.

The experiments are being conducted under the direction of Dr. Thaddeus L. Bolton, head of the department of psychology. They test the theory that students can learn with greater speed and ease if not forced to use the wrong hand.

"There are many persons in whom the two hands seem to have equal learning power," Dr. Bolton explained. "They respond with equal accomplishments for equal amounts of practice. In all other cases one hand learns more and faster than the other."

The study, Dr. Bolton concludes, points out the futility of training strongly right- or left-handed persons to play the piano or in other skills requiring the use of both hands.

Psychology

Science News-Letter, August 9, 1930

The Answer Is

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A Fish With Hands

A FISH of more than ordinary piscine talent is sometimes found in the drifting masses of gulfweed or *Sargassum* in the great mid-Atlantic eddy. It is only a little fish, a couple of inches long, but it can use its two pectoral fins for some of the functions of hands.

It can contract them laterally, though the stiff rays prevent the longitudinal rolling allowed by jointed fingers of men and monkeys. Even this limited prehensile power, however, is highly useful to the little fish, for with one fin or the other it often clings to stalk, blade or float of the drifting weed in whose shelter it lives. Spread out and held downward, as in a gesture of emphatic denial, these fins serve the usual vertical steering function even more efficiently than do the pectorals we see on familiar fishes.

The picture of this fish on the cover is reproduced by permission of the publishers of Wilfrid Swancourt Bronson's book, "Fingerfins."

Ichthyology

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