

CLIMATOLOGY OF FLORIDA

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Climatology of Florida by Charles J. Kenworthy

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CHARLES J. KENWORTHY

**CLIMATOLOGY
OF FLORIDA**

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BY

CHARLES J. KENWORTHY, M. D.,

JACKSONVILLE, FLA.,
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PREFACE.

At a recent meeting of the Florida Medical Association, a paper was read on the Climatology of Florida, by Dr. C. J. Kenworthy, the President, which attracted very general attention. The information which it contains is not only valuable, but it is presented in so forcible a style that we were anxious to have it disseminated through a wider sphere than could be reached by its publication in the proceedings of a medical society. We therefore applied to Dr. Kenworthy for permission to reprint it, and distribute it among the thousands throughout the Northern and Western States who seek a warmer winter climate. This permission was kindly granted, and the author has also taken the opportunity to introduce some statistics that were not available at the time the paper was originally published.

To the annual visitor to Jacksonville, the name of Dr. Kenworthy will be sufficient to attract attention to anything from his pen. To those who do not know him, we will say that he adds to his high standing and long experience as a physician in New York city, in Australia and in Jacksonville, that thorough acquaintance with the forests and streams of Florida, which can only be acquired as an ardent votary of the rod and gun.

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CLIMATOLOGY OF FLORIDA.

BY CHARLES J. KENWORTHY, M. D., JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA.

Mr. President and Gentlemen :

The President, Dr. Daniel, appointed me one of the essayists on this occasion, and I have selected as a subject for a few remarks, the Climatology of Florida, with United States and Continental comparisons. In treating this subject, I shall not aim at originality. In the language of Dr. Lente, of New York, "I make the attempt to enlighten the public, more especially the medical public, on the subject of the Climate of Florida, its adaptability as a health resort, and especially to remove certain unfounded ideas and prejudices which have been wide spread and deeply rooted in Northern communities. It is somewhat surprising that this should be the case with medical men, since positive information on the subject has always been accessible to them in the volumes of the Medical Statistics of the United States Army, the Army Medical Reports, and the Reports of the Adjutant General's Office."*

As evidence that such ignorance does prevail among educated medical men regarding climate, I quote from recent writers.

Dr. Denison remarks: "Of American climates of low elevation, we have the resorts of moist and sedative Florida."† If this gentleman had familiarized himself with the meteorology of Florida, he would have written: "Portions of Florida possess a dry and bracing climate, while some localities are more moist and sedative."

Dr. Napheys uses the following language: "Lower dry climates: Cannes, Mentone, Minnesota, Northern Georgia." "Lower damp climates—Florida: moist, changeable."‡

But the facts in the case, if reliable observations are to be accepted, are the opposite of what Dr. Napheys has asserted. The mean relative humidity of the localities referred to, for the cold months, is as follows:

* *Constituents of Climate*, Louisville Medical Journal, Aug., 1878.

† *Rocky Mountain Health Resorts*, by Charles Denison, A. M., M. D., Boston, 1880, p. 13.

‡ *Modern Medical Therapeutics*, by G. A. Napheys, M. D., Philadelphia, 1880, p. 193.

	November.	December.	January.	February.	March.	Mean for 6 months.	Mean for 6 Months.
Cannes and Mentone*.....	pr ct. 71.8	pr ct. 74.2	pr ct. 72.0	pr ct. 70.7	pr ct. 73.3	pr ct. 72.4	
Augusta, Ga. †.....	71.8	72.6	73.0	64.7	62.8	68.0	
Breckenridge, Minn. †.....	76.9	83.2	76.8	81.8	79.6	79.6	} 74.4
Duluth, Minn. †.....	74.0	72.1	73.7	73.3	71.0	72.6	
St. Paul, Minn. †.....	70.3	73.5	75.2	70.7	67.1	71.4	} 72.7
Jacksonville, Fla. †.....	71.9	69.3	70.2	64.5	63.9	68.8	
Key West, Fla. †.....	77.1	78.7	78.9	77.2	72.2	76.8	
Punta Rassa, Fla. †.....	72.7	75.2	74.2	73.7	69.9	72.7	

From the above data, it appears that the mean relative humidity of Cannes and Mentone, during the cold months, exceeds that of Jacksonville by nearly four per cent. Three stations in Minnesota have a mean of 74.4, and three in Florida a mean of 72.7, showing a per cent. of 1.6 in favor of Florida, and 5.6 per cent. in favor of Jacksonville over Minnesota.

Dr. Talbot Jones, of St. Paul, Minnesota, in an essay published in the New York Medical Journal, September, 1879, says: "The injurious effects of a moist atmosphere have been alluded to. By referring to the foregoing meteorological tables, it will be observed that the atmosphere of this State (Minnesota) is remarkably free from moisture. Hygrometric measurements show that the atmosphere of that State (Florida) is loaded with moisture."

Dr. Jones learnedly discusses "Hygrometric measurements" and "that State loaded with moisture," neglects to favor his readers with a *reliable* "table" referring to the humidity of Florida. Simple assertions, "as that State loaded with moisture," are unprofessional and unreliable.

If we take the entire year, for a period of five years, we will find but little difference in the mean relative humidity of Minnesota and Florida, as the following data, kindly furnished us by the Chief Signal Officer of the United States Army, will demonstrate:

*The Rivelra, E. J. Sparks, M. D., London, 1879, p. 9.

†Signal Office Reports.

Years.	Minnesota.			Florida.		
	Brecken- ridge.	Duluth.	St. Paul.	Jacksonville.	Punta Rasa.	Key West.
1875.....	pr ct. 75.7	pr ct. 67.2	pr ct. 69.0	pr ct. 70.3	pr ct. 76.0	pr ct. 71.5
1876.....	67.7	68.2	69.1	67.2	73.9	76.1
1877.....	72.2	71.9	67.6	69.3	70.5	74.1
1878.....	76.2	71.5	67.7	68.7	72.4	74.5
1879.....	74.1	72.8	65.3	69.7	72.3	74.2
Mean for 5 years.....	73.2	70.3	67.7	69.0	73.0	74.1
Mean for five years for States.....	70.4			72.0		

From the above reliable "data," it will be found that the "atmosphere of Florida," although "loaded with moisture," contains, for the year, but 1 6-10 per cent. of moisture in excess of the "dry and desiccating" climate of Minnesota. During the five cold months, the mean relative humidity of Florida is less than that of Minnesota, and if we accept as conclusive, the "hygrometric measurements" and statements of Dr. Jones, Minnesota is not a suitable climatic resort for invalids during the winter months, for its relative mean humidity is greater than that of Florida, and more especially that of Jacksonville, which he specially condemns, on the ground that the atmosphere is "loaded with moisture." The mean relative humidity of St. Paul exceeds that of Jacksonville for the five cold months by 2.6 per cent.

Natural remedial agents, as climate and mineral waters, are attracting much attention, and reliable data regarding them should be placed before the profession and the public. In the language of Dr. Madden, Physician to St. Joseph's Hospital, Dublin, "Notwithstanding the number of recent works on the subject, there is a great deficiency of accurate information concerning even the most frequented health resorts. For the majority of such books, being written either by those residing in some sanitarium, the advantages of which are unconsciously exaggerated, or else being merely copied from their local advertisements, physicians at home are often misled, and the patients suffer the consequences. He who would attempt to supply the want of a comprehen-

ative and reliable guide to health resorts, should have personal experience in many climes and places, and himself be a physician.*

Difference of opinion exists in the profession regarding the effects of climate in the treatment of pulmonary and other diseases. Having been a member of the profession for over the third of a century, and having treated disease in private practice, as well as in several hospitals in the United States and in other lands, I have reason to believe that I am justified in expressing mine. My reason for settling in this State was my wife's health. She was a sufferer from phthisis, aggravated by a Northern climate. From my personal knowledge of the climatic advantages of this State, acquired by frequent visits, the first in 1844, I resolved upon settling in this city. As a result of change of climate, combined with rational medication, my wife was restored to health. In 1849, I was connected with Bellevue and Blackwell's Island Hospitals, New York, and contracted typhoid fever and cholera, followed by post mortem poisoning, and impaired health was the result. Tracing my family history, I found that my mother and fourteen of her brothers and sisters had died of phthisis. With impaired health, a laryngeal affection and a hereditary predisposition to tuberculosis, I had anything but a bright prospect before me. I looked to climate as my sheet anchor, and sailed for Australia; and a dry and warm climate improved my health, and to-day, as you can all perceive, I am in the enjoyment of as good health as usually falls to the lot of men of my age. After a permanent residence in this State of nearly six years, I am convinced of its healthfulness and the superiority of its climate, and deem myself warranted in expressing an opinion.

When invalids visit a Southern clime, they expect to find perpetual spring, and a climate made to order, "a wonderful paradise, and cry out like naughty children when their delusion is exploded." But a model climate does not exist, and no country is perfect in this respect. The physician's object should be to select for his patients the situation presenting the greatest advantages and the fewest objectionable features for the case under consideration. Annually, patients migrate to health resorts merely to find a grave, as a sequence of being sent from home when beyond the hope of cure, or because "a situation unfavorable to the particular malady has been selected, the laws of climate being ill un-

* Health Resorts—T. M. Madden, M. D., 1876, p. 7.

derstood, and in some measure, because it is difficult to persuade the sick that simple change from one climate to another country or section, is *only one of the means* by which they are to regain their health. For, although there can be no doubt that in change of air, physicians have an efficient remedial agent, yet it is certain that this remedy, like all others, is not of indiscriminate application, but must be prescribed with judgment.* "Of the large and annually increasing number of invalids, more especially consumptive patients, who are now sent abroad to winter in vaporous health resorts, probably as many are injured by a wrong or by too tardy a change of climate, as are saved by the timely and judicious use of this most valuable remedy. Patients, as a rule, will not abandon the comforts of home, or the avocations of their life, so long as they can cling to them, nor do physicians generally prescribe this step until other treatment has failed, and then, when perhaps the disease is far advanced, the patient may be induced to try a change of climate as a last resource."†

What climate shall be chosen for the invalid, is a matter of vital importance, and an error in this direction may be fatal. In some instances, neither physicians nor patients fully appreciate the necessity of deciding correctly and abiding by the decision. Invalids are often imprisoned in some secluded spot, which happens to be brought prominently before them or their physicians by a well written pamphlet, when a frequent change of air would have been beneficial to them, and when the moral effect of change of scene would have been more useful. On the other hand, those who require rest and quiet are allowed to rush wildly along and pass the greater part of their time in traveling. Others are consigned to a cold, damp and changeable climate, when they require the opposite. Some are sent to a tropical and moist climate, when they would be benefited by a moderate, dry and bracing one. Dr. Brinton, of Philadelphia, has aptly, yet bluntly, presented this subject, and we shall quote his language: "And here I must say with all due deference to the faculty, that the ignorance and carelessness of physicians in reference to this matter are, at most, reprehensible. Few of them make any distinction in cases. They send all consumptives to Minnesota, or to Texas, or to Cuba, or Florida, as if in every instance what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Thus it hap-

*Tanner's Practice of Medicine, p. 782.

† Health Resorts—Madden, p. 1.