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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
of Clark University,
discusses:

RAINMAKING

Man is not satisfied merely with trying to forecast the weather, he has long wanted to control it. Magic, religion, science, have all been called upon in endeavors to bring troublesome weather to terms. Rainmaking, in particular, has been universally attempted, by savages with incantations, and, just as futilely, by modern "rainmakers" with dust and chemicals. A certain Scotch minister showed himself a good weather observer when he declared, "Mon, I will nae pray for rain when the wind is in the nor'west."

It has been noticed that sometimes a cumulus cloud will form over a good-sized fire. Such a cloud at times may even yield a sprinkle of rain. This has induced people to build large bonfires in the hope of ending a drought. But although this local heating may start a small convectional circulation, no cloud or rain can form unless moisture is present in the air already, nor rain unless moisture is abundant. The hopelessness of such small scale operations is clear when we consider the enormous amount of energy involved in even one small storm. In the last analysis, the sun is the giant heater that drives all our cyclones and produces all but an infinitesimal part of our warmth, winds, clouds, and rain.

(Tomorrow: "Rainmaking" as a Profession)

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