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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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

"RAINMAKING" AS A PROFESSION

Although there is no practical known method of producing rainfall on an adequate scale, "rainmaking" is still a profitable profession. Usually, the "rainmaker" contracts to produce a certain minimum amount of rain within a specified time, perhaps at the rate of \$1000 to \$5000 per inch. "No rain: no pay!" is the attractive slogan that appeals to the helpless farmers, who will not sit idly by waiting for rain to come. When anything is wrong, even if it is the weather, something must be done about it. And the "rainmaker" is ready. While a few decades ago the "rainmaker" sent up bombs or made heavy concussions, now he prefers the less ostentatious, cheaper and more "scientific" method of liberating secret, rain persuading chemicals from the top of a special tower. The old "rainmaker" had to stall, with his apparatus "out of order", till large cumulus clouds appeared. The new one bides his time, awaiting the inevitable rain.

Why does a "rainmaker" succeed? We can be sure that a modern community would not hire one until drought conditions became alarming. Such a state is the final product of several months of similar weather. It is about time for the weather to change - and the "rainmaker" usually gets the money. But it is not always so easy. Thus, in January, 1916, after San Diego had hired a "rainmaker" it was soon afflicted with such a deluge that the city council sued him for overdoing the matter! On some annoying occasions during recent years the rain has arrived just too late or too soon. In one case, there was a downpour of rain two days after the close of the appointed period, during which the "rainmaker" had failed; in another it poured before the "rainmaker's" contract was signed; and in a third before he could complete his tower. Such events give aid and comfort to the skeptics and swell their ranks. -----

(Tomorrow: Making the Weather to Suit)

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