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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WATER-SUPPLY

A subject agitating the people of eastern Massachusetts nowadays, and at other times worrying other communities, is the question of adequate reservoirs for water supply. Engineers built reservoirs that were supposed to ~~care~~ for the growing needs of the Boston and Worcester regions till about 1940. But already they have found their reservoirs either wholly inadequate, as in the case of Worcester, or at present dangerously low, as in the metropolitan water district of Boston.

What's the trouble? Has the climate changed; did the engineers miscalculate; or have the people begun using much larger quantities of water? We shall consider only the climatic aspects: The engineers and water boards can discuss the others. Rain water is rather slippery. It would seem that all one had to know about it was the average annual rainfall, in order to determine the drainage area necessary to give the number of billion gallons required. But average rainfall rarely occurs. Huge reservoirs would be required to hold all the water of wet years. One of the striking features of this water shortage was that it began scarcely more than a year after all the reservoirs were full to overflowing! A wet year, 1922, was followed by a very dry one. The excess of water lost over the spillways in 1922 was beyond recall to offset the drought of 1923. Thus the run-off from average rainfall is not all available for water supply over a period of years.

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