A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RAINFALL OVER THE GREAT LAKES

The recent low levels of water in the Great Lakes following deficient rainfall in that region have occasioned some concern, and the question is raised whether the climate is changing and whether deforestation is responsible for the change. A timely discussion of the matter by P. C. Day of the U. S. Weather Bureau shows that the last eight or nine years have been the longest dry period in 50 years. From 1917 to 1925 rainfall has been below normal over almost the entire Lake region. Rainfall varies more widely than any other weather element, but always tends to return to the normal amount.

It appears that deforestation does not noticeably alter the amount of precipitation at any locality, although it may increase the rate of run-off. Marietta, Ohio, has rainfall records extending back 100 years, to a time when the region was heavily forested. Yet the average precipitation of the first 50 years is less than 1 per cent greater than the average of the last 50 years.

There is no indication that the recent deficiency of rainfall is likely to be permanent; but an immediate rise in lake levels is hardly possible. The lake levels always lag behind the rainfall, as it takes some time for the run-off to reach the lakes. If 1926 is a dry year and 1927 has a good rainfall the water level may continue to fall in 1927 unless the increase in rain is very marked.

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