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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE COST OF ARTIFICIAL WEATHER

A good many startling feats in weather-making could doubtless be achieved if people were willing and able to pay the price. There are conditions of the atmosphere in which it would be possible to produce a good-sized thundershower by merely burning down a forest, or, if one preferred, a large city. Back in the year 1845, before any thought was given to forest conservation, a leading meteorologist, James P. Espy, seriously proposed the burning of large areas of woodland in the western states at weekly intervals through the summer in order to regulate the winds and rainfall to the eastward.

The idea of generating rain by means of artificial vortices in the atmosphere, produced (regardless of expense) by powerful blowing machinery, is one that crops up from time to time. One genius, observing the deposit of water on the outside of an ice pitcher, proposed to set up a barrier packed with ice in the path of moisture-bearing winds. Dr. W. J. Humphreys, of the U. S. Weather Bureau, has figured up the expense of operating such a contrivance under average conditions in a western state where the yearly cost of water for irrigation is now about \$2 an acre. He finds that the thing could be run at a cost of about \$20,000 an acre per annum.

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