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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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BREAKING A DROUGHT IN CHINA

In the United States and Canada a severe and protracted drought generally provides lucrative employment for alleged "rain-makers", whose operations have just as much real effect upon the elements as does the sailor's scratching of the mast when he wants a wind. China is another enlightened nation. The Chinese method of breaking a drought is described as follows by Walter H. Mallory, in a publication of the American Geographical Society:

"When matters really become serious, the governors of the provinces concerned issue mandates forbidding the slaughter of live stock, and the population goes without meat for three days. If this does not bring the desired rain, processions are formed and a sort of holiday is declared in order to invoke the heavens. In Hantan, Chili Province, there is an iron tablet that has most wonderful properties for bringing rain. In 1924 there was a very dry spring, and the summer monsoon did not arrive in June, as it should have done. Matters finally reached such a pass that the central government, in desperation, decided to bring the iron tablet to Peking from the country. This was done in July, and lo, the heavens opened and China had one of the worst floods of several decades."

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