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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A CAUSE OF CLIMATIC CHANGES

Though the everyday assertion that "the climate has changed," referring to changes supposed to have occurred within a generation or so, is a pure fallacy, great changes of climate have undoubtedly taken place in the course of ages, and some of these probably resulted from variations in the circulation of the ocean, which, in turn, were brought about by the opening and closing of passageways for the water between bodies of land. Dr. W.J. Humphreys, in his "Physics of the Air," says:

"If the immense system of hot-water heating by which the temperature of the whole surface of the earth tends to become equalized should be greatly modified by the opening of a valve here or the closing of another there, correspondingly great climatic modifications would have to follow; and there are several, perhaps many, such valves that have been opened or closed, irregularly and from time to time, since the beginning of the geological records."

At the cost of stupendous labor mankind probably could, if there were any sufficient incentive for doing so, bring about some far-reaching changes of this character. Thus modern engineers, with unlimited money at their disposal, might spoil the climate of western Europe by obliterating the Gulf Stream. The obvious way to do this would be to open a wide sea-level channel through Central America, from the Caribbean to the Pacific. The westward flow of waters, driven by the trade winds and now deflected northward by the barrier of the land to form the Gulf Stream, would wholly or in great part pass through this channel into the Pacific, cutting off to a great extent the warm-water supply of the North Atlantic Ocean, which, through the agency of the winds, now gives western Europe a mild climate.

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