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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A TIP FOR THE RAIN-MAKER

A severe and protracted drought in any agricultural district of the United States or Canada usually affords a golden harvest to the charlatans who claim to be able to produce rain. The business methods of the typical operator in this field are ingenious. His offer invariably emphasizes the feature of "no rain, no pay," but he never agrees to forfeit any money in case the promised showers fail to materialize. By virtue of his one-sided contract he has everything to gain and nothing to lose, so that his bargain is about the safest gamble going.

It remained, however, for a distinguished American scientific man, Dr. David Starr Jordan, to point out how the rain-making humbuggery might become an even more dependable source of revenue than it is. According to Dr. Jordan's plan, the wizard makes the usual contract to produce rain within a certain length of time for a certain sum. He then takes out insurance at Lloyd's against continuous dry weather during the same period. If rain falls, he collects from his clients. If it doesn't, he collects from Lloyd's. Assuming the insurance premium to be less than 100 per cent. of the face of the policy and also less than the amount to be paid for rain by the drought-stricken farmers -- conditions that probably could be met in most cases -- the scheme is absolutely perfect.

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