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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE HONGKONG RAIN-MAKING EXPERIMENT

Last June a good deal of publicity was given in the press to an attempt made at Hongkong, China, to break a protracted drought by the process of sprinkling dust on the clouds from aircraft. Aviators of the Royal Air Force made seven flights and dropped about 100 lbs. of kaolin, which was expected by those who favored the undertaking to cause the cloud droplets to coalesce and form raindrops. No rain resulted.

Some reports published on the subject conveyed the idea that the Hongkong Observatory, one of the best known meteorological establishments in the orient, was responsible for this attempt. The facts were these:

Somebody proposed the scheme to the colonial government and the authorities sought the advice of the observatory. The acting director, C. W. Jeffries, recommended trying the plan once, at the same time stating that he had little doubt it would fail. He says in a current scientific journal:

"Had the government refused to countenance the experiment, there would have remained a feeling in the public mind that one possible solution of the water problem had not been tried. The experiments were authorized by the government to discount any subsequent criticism. No belief in a materially successful result was held by the administration or its advisers, including my colleagues and myself."

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