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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DUST IN THE AIR

Not so many years ago anybody who had suggested that atmospheric dust is one of the most interesting and important things in the world would have been regarded as a candidate for a lunatic asylum. In the days of our grandfathers little thought was given to the solid matter in the air, except in so far as the deposits of it indoors made work for broom and mop, and occasional clouds of it outdoors annoyed travelers on dry roads.

Now the whole civilized world is much concerned about dust. The variety of ways in which it affects human welfare is remarkable. Dust-laden air is bad for the lungs, spreads germ diseases, injures vegetation, filters the healthgiving rays out of sunshine, ruins machinery, causes disastrous explosions, mars the beauty of cities, and slows down traffic by diminishing visibility.

All these are relatively minor effects of dust, though of great importance to mankind. Dust plays a part on a much larger scale in the economy of nature. Every year millions of tons of it are transported from one part of the earth to another, thus gradually bringing about profound geographic effects. Last but not least, the dust always present in the atmosphere has a number of far-reaching effects upon weather and climate.

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