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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A DESERT INDUSTRY

Climate plays a part in most industries. One that is wholly dependent upon it is the collection of guano on the coasts and islands of Peru. Where this industry prevails, rain is almost unknown. In regions of even moderate rainfall, though sea-birds may be as numerous and similar deposits may be formed in equal abundance, the nitrates of the guano give rise to ammonia and are wasted by evaporation or seepage. In Peru the guano is laid down year after year beneath a clear, dry atmosphere. The deposit bakes in the sun and its most valuable constituents are imprisoned for an indefinite period.

Great beds of guano have been formed upon islands of the Caribbean Sea, on others off the coast of Africa, and on still others in the South Pacific far from Peru, yet these guanos are not comparable to the Peruvian product, for in the moister climates the nitrogen is soon lost in the form of ammonia, while the insoluble phosphates remain to form a much less valuable "phosphatic" guano.

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