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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

A RAIN WITH A MORAL

Dr. Hugh Robert Mill has recorded - for the sake of pointing a moral - an episode connected with an excursion through the southwestern United States in which he took part, in company with other members of the Eighth International Geographical Congress, in 1904. At a Pueblo village in New Mexico, where no rain had fallen for more than a month, the party found, late in September, a big rain dance in progress. Three days later, after a visit to the Grand Canyon, a stop was made at a Navajo village, not far from the Pueblo village previously visited, and here one of the travelers obtained possession of two images of rain gods, which were carried off to be placed in an eastern museum. The train then proceeded eastward, but almost immediately ran into a torrential rainstorm. As a result of washouts the party was marooned some distance from any town or village for three days. There was no diner on the train and only rudimentary meals could be obtained.

"The Pueblo Indians," wrote Dr. Mill just after this experience, "when next their priest tries to reason with them on the futility of their superstitious dances, will think complacently of the unmistakable efficacy of the rain dance of September 25th, which had produced the memorable rains of the 28th and the 29th. The Navajos, if ever they hear of the fate of the excursion train, will have no hesitation in tracing the rain gods' vengeance for the desecration of their shrine, and they will set up new images with increased confidence in their power to control the elements. The Indians will not remember instances of rain dances held in vain, of rain gods stolen or destroyed without a break in the serenity of the sky."

Superstitious beliefs, once they take root, are perpetuated from age to age by the common mental process of "counting the hits but not the misses" - and not exclusively among untutored red men.

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