

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE RAIN-MAKER

Professional rain wizards have hitherto enjoyed a singular immunity from the operation of laws designed to protect the gullible citizens of the country from being bamboozled. There are "blue sky" laws to discourage the sale of worthless securities, and there are laws to balk the would-be dispenser of fake nostrums and adulterated foods, but legislators have thus far done nothing about the rain-maker.

The business methods he employs are well known. He enters a community where the crops are perishing for lack of water, and where the inhabitants, in desperation, are ready to clutch at any straw that holds out some faint prospect of relief from the drought. This straw he supplies in the shape of a promise to produce rain within a specified time after the signing of a contract, according to which he is to receive, say, a thousand dollars an inch for whatever rainfall occurs. His offer always emphasizes the alluring feature of "no rain, no pay." If the showers do not arrive on time, the farmer loses nothing. If they do, the salvation of his crop puts him in such a happy frame of mind that he cheerfully pays the bill without inquiring too narrowly into the way in which the showers were brought about.

The rain-maker never agrees to forfeit any money in case the promised rain fails to materialize. By virtue of his one-sided contract, he has everything to gain and nothing to lose beyond his actual expenses, and in many cases the contract stipulates that his expenses shall be paid by the other party whether rain falls or not. Thus his business is about the safest gamble going.

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