

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 26, 1932

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A FAMOUS SANDSTORM

The most famous sandstorm in history was the one that, according to Herodotus, destroyed the army sent by the Persian king Cambyses into the Libyan Desert.

"This ambitious prince," says Dr. D.P. Thomson, in his once well-known treatise on meteorology, "having routed the Egyptians and heard of the reputed wealth of the long-lived Macrobian, resolved to make war against that Ethiopian race. Having reached Thebes, he separated his army into two divisions, directing 50,000 of his troops to advance against the Ammonians and pillage the temple of Jupiter Ammon. It appears that they reached the Libyan Oasis, but they never returned, for a sand-wind rose from the south, near to the temple of Ammon, and in its violent blast overwhelmed the army, utterly destroying them so that no one ever returned to tell the tale. Such, too, was nearly the fate of the soldiers of Alexander about two centuries thereafter, while they crossed the desert from Memphis to Jupiter Ammon, a twelve-days' journey Belzoni mentions having met with a number of tumuli in the desert, which he supposes to have been raised over the army of Cambyses.

"Yasasin, King of Yemen, in Arabia Felix -- the successor of Belkis, according to the Arabs, the famous Queen of Sheba -- is said to have carried his armies into the unexplored deserts of the west; but being overtaken by the whirlwinds of erratic sands, he was forced to return with the loss of a portion of his men."

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