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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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EXPLOSIVES AND RAIN

From remote antiquity the belief has prevailed that battles cause rain. Plutarch, writing of this belief about a century after the birth of Christ, suggests that the rain may be sent by a divine power to wash the polluted ground, or that it may be due to the vapors rising from the blood and mangled corpses of the slain. The supposed connection between cannonading and rainfall is a modern elaboration of this old belief.

The present popularity of the idea dates from the publication in 1871 of a book by Edward Powers, entitled "War and Weather; or the Artificial Production of Rain." In 1874 a plan to mass artillery of the United States Army in Texas in order to break a drought was advocated by several prominent Americans. In 1890 the Congress of the United States was induced to appropriate money for rain-making experiments, which were carried out by Gen. R.G. Dyrenforth in Texas, where various explosives were set off on the ground and also raised with kites and balloons and exploded in the air. In 1911 and 1912 the late C.W. Post, the breakfast food manufacturer, staged a much more elaborate series of experiments in Texas and Michigan. Both Dyrenforth and Post believed that they attained some success, but the contemporary weather maps indicated that the rains following some of the experiments were due to natural causes.

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