

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DISPELLING FOG

Various attempts were made to dispel fog even before this problem became of vast practical importance on account of the rise of aviation, which now loses, in time and damaged planes, millions of dollars a year, besides a good many lives, on account of this weather handicap. Sir Oliver Lodge tried electrical precipitation in England many years ago. A little later the similar Cottrell process, which is so successfully applied to treating industrial dusts and fumes, was used on the fogs along the California coast under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. The Army and Navy air services in the United States and the Royal Air Force in Great Britain have tried the effects of sprinkling various hygroscopic dusts in the air, and electrified sand has been similarly employed in the United States.

Some of these experiments had in view the possibility of rain-making as well as the dispersal of fogs and cloud. Probably the most ambitious efforts to dispel fog were those that were in progress for some years at the Naval Aircraft Factory in Philadelphia, where elaborate machines were constructed for spraying electrified water drops into foggy air in order to cause the fog particles to coalesce and fall to the ground. Lastly, the process of coating the surface of a river with oil to check evaporation and prevent troublesome fogs from forming was tried at Lyons, France, just before the world war, and at Pittsburgh, Pa., about ten years ago. In several of the undertakings above mentioned some success was attained, but no process seems yet to have justified itself on financial grounds.

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