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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RATTLESNAKES AND RAIN

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"When rattlesnakes came out in numbers Sourdough muttered, 'That don't look good. They're movin' toward water an' away from a dry country.' He killed a big rattler with 'eleven rattles an' a button,' as he boasted, and hung it over the fence *** to bring rain." The quotation is from Dorothy Scarborough's Texas novel, "The Wind." The custom of hanging up a snake to bring rain is very widespread. In Texas the snake thus treated is generally a rattler.

Prof. J. Frank Dobie, in an account of the weather folklore of the Texas-Mexican border, says: "While it is an unwritten law of the border that every man shall kill every rattlesnake found, it is a kind of implied duty that, the snake killed, he shall hang it up. To increase the effectiveness of the hanging I have seen Mexicans make a snare out of horse tail and go to no end of trouble to noose the rattler and hang it up alive. In the Panhandle country the charm to produce rain *** is to turn the snake over on its back three times."

There is one thing to be said in favor of these superstitious procedures for bringing rain -- they are a great deal cheaper than engaging the services of a professional rain-maker. What, by the way, has become of the arrant swindlers who undertake to produce rain for a price? Apparently they are missing golden opportunities during the present severe drought in the middle west.

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