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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DROUGHTS AND IRRIGATION

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The common desire of mankind to make available for agriculture lands having normally a meager supply of rain has found expression in North America in the building of many costly dams, reservoirs and irrigation canals in selected regions of the arid and semi-arid West. These elaborate installations appear, with some exceptions, to justify their existence on several grounds. They have brought extremely fertile soil under cultivation; they have permitted the raising on a large scale of crops that could not be so successfully raised, with or without irrigation, in other parts of the continent; and, by making the land habitable, they have promoted the development of various industries and the utilization of natural resources that might otherwise have remained untouched.

Doubtless this conquest of the desert will go on -- yet it seems likely that the next generation of Americans will devote an even larger share of attention to the task of protecting regions of normally abundant rainfall from the occasional disaster of drought than to attempts to eke out a scanty rainfall elsewhere. Western Europe has set us an admirable example in the irrigation of humid lands. Thus France, with a normal rainfall sufficient in all parts of the country for the needs of agriculture, irrigates more than six million acres of her soil. Italy, another generally well-watered land, irrigates between four and five million acres, and her irrigation works have long been models for the world.

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