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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE PARADOX OF DROUGHT

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

It is a paradox that the inhabitants of the earth should ever suffer on a vast scale from a scarcity of water, since the amount of this substance always present on our planet is enormous. The oceans and other permanent bodies of water contain, according to a recent estimate, more than 332,500,000 cubic miles of it, weighing upwards of ^{1 1/2} ~~15~~ quintillion tons (according to American notation, equivalent in British notation to ^{1 1/2} ~~15~~ trillion). Moreover, every second, on an average, a total of something like 16 million tons is evaporated into the atmosphere and spread abroad by the winds, and at the same average rate of 16 million tons a second rain and snow are constantly falling upon the globe.

One explanation of the paradox is that Nature is outrageously capricious in distributing rainfall over the lands. Another is that the two great industries that suffer most from drought -- agriculture and grazing -- are far from being intelligently adjusted to well-known facts of climate. The ultimate solution of the drought problem will probably be to abolish both these industries in favor of far more efficient and dependable methods of producing food and clothing directly from their raw materials within the walls of factories.

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21st and Constitution Ave.
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