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March 20, 1935 ? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 13, 1935

RAINFALL TRENDS

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Authority on Meteorology

Much evidence has come to light in recent times that the rainfall of certain regions tends to increase irregularly for a number of years and then to decrease for a number of years. These upward and downward swings are probably due to slow changes in the general circulation of the atmosphere. Their corresponding phases occur at different times in different regions, so that the average rainfall of the earth as a whole probably does not vary much.

Thus over the northern Middle West, in the United States, there has been a general decline of rainfall since 1908 (which does not mean, however, that each year since 1908 was drier than the preceding one). At St. Paul, Minnesota, a long record of rainfall measurements shows previous declines to minima about 1848 and 1894, followed by upward trends.

A recent study of South African rainfall by T.E.W. Schumann and W.R. Thompson shows for many parts of the country a more or less definite though irregular downward trend during the last 40 to 50 years. South Africa enjoyed a period of plentiful rains about 1890 (roughly from 1885 to 1895), and this coincided with a rainy period in New South Wales and South Australia.

The authorities just mentioned think these rainfall trends in the southern hemisphere may be due to slow shifts in storm tracks, resulting from corresponding shifts in the location of the broken belt of high atmospheric pressure that encircles the globe in the "horse latitudes."

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