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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHEN THE DESERTS WERE WET

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During the last great ice age, in a mild stage of which we are now living, there are supposed to have been four or five glacial periods, when the glaciers invaded the temperate zones, separated by interglacial periods, when the ice retreated poleward and may even have melted entirely away. In lower latitudes, where there was no ice, there were corresponding periods of heavy and light rainfall, known respectively as pluvial periods and interpluvial periods. Probably the advance of the ice and of the area of high atmospheric pressure over it pushed the tracks of rain-producing storms equatorward, while with the retreat of the ice the storm tracks shifted poleward.

Thus in pluvial periods the present Sahara Desert had a rainy climate. So did now dry regions in central Asia, in South Africa and in the Great Basin of North America. In the latter the present Great Salt Lake is the small remnant of an inland sea, known to geologists as Lake Bonneville, which is supposed to have grown and shrunk more than once during "pluvials" and "interpluvials."

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