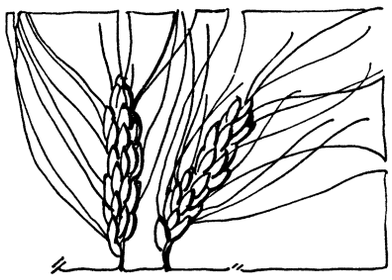
AGRONOMY

## NATURE RAMBLINGS by Frank Thone



### Money Won't Stop Dust

CONGRESS has reacted typically to the renewed menace of blowing clouds of soil-destruction from the Southwest's "dust-bowl;" a call for an emergency appropriation has been introduced, and will probably be passed. Presently the listing-plows will be throwing furrows across the direction of soil drift, in an effort sadly reminiscent of the tide-stemming endeavors of King Canute.

Driving these dust-checking furrows is not quite as futile as Canute's gesture; it does hold the dust back a little. And since it is the one human effort that can be put forth in the face of the man-released malevolence of nature, it is worth doing, if it were only to save our self-respect.

But no one should nurse the illusion that the spending of money by Congress will really remedy the situation. Money won't stop dust. The only real cure for the "dust bowl," that dry ulcer on the national body, is rain, that will give the grass leave to grow again, holding the now truant soil particles in the manifold tenacious fingers of its roots.

And the coming of rain to this sorely afflicted region is something quite out of the control of man. If we should blow in the price of a whole fleet of battleships, instead of the really modest two million dollars which is all the Oklahoma congressmen are asking, we could not cause a drop of rain to fall there, or a blade of the late lamented buffalo grass to sprout.

The plight of the "dust bowl" is the plight of Tantalus—water all about, but a deadly thirst still unslaked. The disturbances, or "lows" that bring rain and snow have swung to the north, bringing the blessing of snow to the once drought-blighted lands of the Northwest. They have swung to the south, bringing rain to the Gulf area. But the fatal corner, where the states of Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico touch boundaries, has known only skies that are pitilessly dry.

The Great American Desert, that spread itself over the maps of the West in Thomas Jefferson's day, turned out to be a myth. But in our own day, thanks to wheat-boomers' disregard of the warning of "botany perfessers," we have made ourselves a neat little cold inferno of an American Gobi. Only grace from above, in the form of rain, can bring redemption. Our own penance, though expressed in the form of the holy American dollar sign, may palliate, but cannot undo the mischief we have wrought.

*Science News Letter, March 7, 1936*

AVIATION-RADIO

# Patent Claims Television Can Land Plane in Fog

HOW television may eliminate many of the hazards of blind landings in even the densest fog and blackest night by figuratively providing the pilot with fog and night piercing eyes, is revealed in a U.S. patent granted to John Hays Hammond, Jr., noted for his inventions of navigational guide systems, and son of the famous mining engineer.

Bridging the fog-filled gap between plane and airport, radio waves travelling with the speed of light carry a picture of the landing field to the pilot, simultaneously with data of the exact position of his plane over it, the direction of his flight, his altitude, wind velocity and wind direction—all the data he needs for a safe landing.

The sending of the picture is accomplished with the aid of television which some experts say will be here on an everybody basis within two to five years.

Here briefly is how the inventor's patented system does it:

As the airplane approaches the field, it sends out radio signals. These, or the roar of the plane's propellers, are picked up on the landing field by delicate direction finders, like those used by armies to detect and trace the position and direction of flight of enemy planes.

The direction finders, operating complicated mechanism, trace this information by means of a tiny light bulb, which moves over a photograph or facsimile of the airport and the surrounding landscape with its hills, river, forest, high chimneys and church steeples. At any instant the position of the light bulb on the facsimile indicates the exact position of a plane over the field, while an arrow hooked up with the bulb points in the direction of flight.

A television transmitter now televises the whole picture from the airport via radio waves to the pilot, together with the other data already mentioned. This picture appears before him on the television receiver attached to the instrument panel of the plane. The aviator, therefore, will always have in front of him a view of the landing field and the surrounding country with a bright spot of light indicating the position of his plane over the field, so that he can make a safe landing at night or in fog.

Inventor Hammond also contemplates the use of his television navigation guide to aid the movement of ships.

*Science News Letter, March 7, 1936*