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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks  
of Clark University.

MOUNTAIN CLOUD PROGNOSTICS

A number of proverbs advise us that when a mountain wears a cloud cap, or a table mountain is decked with a white cloud tablecloth, it is an indication of coming rain. The mountains are wind elevators. The air over mountains both in quiet weather and in windy is cooled to temperatures lower than those elsewhere at corresponding levels, and so clouds are very apt to appear first over or on the mountains; the height, form, density and movements of such clouds tell much as to the trend of the weather. In fair weather, clouds tend to form first over mountains where the surface of heating is nearest a level at which condensation will take place. In windy weather the air must rise and cool in passing, thus giving additional impetus to cloud formation. If the air is becoming damper, the mountains may suddenly become enveloped in clouds. Then condensation will occur morereadily till the clouds are only 1,000 to 2,000 feet above the lowlands and envelope the middle slopes and ridges. Showers tend to develop over mountains and drift a short distance before dissipating; therefore, places in the lee of mountains receive more rain than other nearby localities.

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(Tomorrow: Why the Rainbow?)

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