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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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QUIET WEATHER

Fair weather in autumn is usually quiet weather, at least for well over half the 24 hours. During October nights, a layer of cold, sometimes foggy, air collects over the surface of the ground. As the nights are longer than in summer, nocturnal cooling has more chance to act and build up a thick cushion of such cool stagnant air. The general winds, particularly if they are southerly and, therefore, becoming warmer and lighter, will not mix with this denser surface cushion, but tend to ride over, without reaching the ground. Therefore, the surface weather is calm and quiet, though clouds may be moving briskly at higher levels. By the middle of the morning or later, perhaps, the sun's heat may succeed in warming the cold surface layer, starting convection and mixture with the wind above. The breeze then reaches the surface. In hilly regions, the autumn calm may be disturbed by mountain and valley breezes. The mountain breeze is the flow of cooled air down slopes and valleys at night, while the valley breeze is the blowing of warmed air up valleys by day. The quiet weather of October is of the same sort as that of November, usually called Indian Summer when it lasts for a few days together.

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(Tomorrow: The Woodsmen's Portents of Winter)

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