

No. 476

A Science Service Feature

Nov. 19

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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VISIBILITY BEFORE RAIN

The belief that exceptionally good visibility is a sign of coming rain does not seem to be substantiated by observations. Visibility decreases as the dust in the air increases. The air is usually least dusty immediately after a rain rather than before. Also, as dust or smoke particles tend to take up moisture and thereby become larger when the air is damp, the increasing humidity before rain thickens the haze. It may be said, however, that if haze is already present, the view will be improved when heavy clouds shut off the strong light which illuminates the haze and causes shimmering. Then one may see distant objects better, even though the atmosphere itself is no clearer.

A series of observations in England show that of days with a visibility of 21 miles or more, only a third were followed by appreciable rain between the observation and 7 the next morning, while, when all days were considered, such rain occurred in 45 per cent. of the cases. In general, visibility is best in the early morning after a clear night following a rainy day, and good visibility should be considered a prognostic of fair weather rather than of rain.

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(Tomorrow: Rain With Rising Pressure)

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