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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHY THE WEATHER CLEARS AFTER A STORM

The most brilliantly clear weather usually occurs shortly after a storm, or low, has passed. What happens on the rear of a low? Just how does a storm clear the air? After the storm we are literally supplied with "fresh air". The air is arriving from colder regions to the north or west and is being warmed and hence dried as it comes. In addition, the air is descending from above, rather than rising, as in front of a low. Descending air is generally clearer than rising air, for one thing, it is being heated and dried by compression, so that it is practically cloudless.

The cause of this descent of air is somewhat complex. The winds on the rear of the storm, the "following" winds, may be thought of as belonging rather to the oncoming anticyclone or high than to the passing cyclone or low. They are winds tending to blow in general from the north or northeast, but turning somewhat eastward toward the low they become northwest winds. The winds along the ground flow more outward from the high than those at moderate heights. Furthermore, these winds commonly do not follow the retreating low as fast as the storm is moving on. Some air must, therefore, come down from above, clear and dry.

(Tomorrow: Rains on the Rears of Lows)

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