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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ALTERNATING WEATHER

Fair yesterday, fair tomorrow, but never fair today is the story when lows and highs are alternating rapidly. The speed with which the weather clears, clouds up, rains and clears again depends both on the rate of travel of the passing highs and lows and on their size and shape. A "low" or storm area may vary from over 1500 to 200 or 300 miles in width. Since lows move in general from west to east you can expect the most sudden alternations with oval lows elongated in a north and south direction, and narrow from east to west. Narrow storms which pass quickly are not likely to give such heavy rains as more substantial lows. Yet they may have sufficiently well developed countercurrents on their front and rear to cause sudden temperature changes. First comes the warm southerly wind, followed shortly as the storm passes by a colder wind from the northwest.

Occasionally a low is elongated in an east-west instead of a north-south direction. Under such conditions it may take a long time for the trough of low pressure to pass by a given station. The rain is less well distributed; it is concentrated in a narrow belt, with dry areas to north and south. It is as if the sprinkler on a watering cart were parallel to the direction of the road instead of across it.

(Tomorrow: Honey Weather)

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