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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THUNDERSTORM WEATHER

Will there be a thunderstorm this afternoon? You often wonder. In the tropics, the answer is usually "Yes!". Indeed, people confidently say "Meet us after the rain". The first condition favoring a local thunderstorm is a warm or hot day, the hotter the better. If the temperature does not rise at least to 70 degrees, the chances of a thunderstorm are rather small. Though strong heating is required to produce the typical convectional or "heat" thunderstorm, the heavy "line" thunderstorm may occur on the boundary of crisscross winds even in winter.

In addition to heat, we must have moisture for our thunderstorm. If the air is so humid that dew will form on a glass of water having a temperature of 75 or over, conditions are ideal for a heavy shower. On the other hand, if the dewpoint is below 65 degrees Fahrenheit, thunderstorms are unlikely.

Besides heat and moisture we need freedom from strong winds. Heavy winds prevent that local overheating necessary for the genesis of the vertical air currents which support shower clouds. Calm, rising, warm moist air, then, favors thunderstorms and is found most frequently in the southeast quadrant of a low pressure area. Thunderstorms rarely occur in "highs" where air is generally dry and descending.

(Tomorrow: Cloudbursts)

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