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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SUN DRAWING WATER

When a beam of sunlight enters a darkened room through a chink in a shutter, a definite shaft of light is visible, because the sun illuminates all the little dust particles in its path. Sometimes this same effect is seen on a large scale in the sky, and is popularly called "the sun drawing water". The sun is low in the sky and is hidden from the observer by heavy clouds. But here and there rays pass through small openings in the clouds, lighting up the haze beneath, making definite beams of light which contrast sharply with the dark shadows cast by the clouds.

The "sun drawing water" is supposed to be a portent of rain. The "crepuscular rays", as the beams of light are called by meteorologists, appear most clearly when the air is hazy, that is, full of particles, usually small dust nuclei which have increased their size by collecting moisture from the air. Sometimes the beam is illuminated by reflection from snow crystals or raindrops that may be falling only part way to the ground. But even under these circumstances the "sun drawing water" is a mighty shaky sign of rain. For the long shafts of light can be seen in the dry dusty air of arid regions as well as through damp air and heavy clouds.

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(Tomorrow: High Barometer Vs Rain)

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