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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RAINY AIR

Before it rains we expect the lower air to get more muggy. In fact, all types of humidity "barometers" make their indications of rain by their reactions to increasing dampness; for example, the doll with a blue dress that turns pink, or the cottage of Hansel and Gretel. But we must not forget that our lower air is often merely that through which rain falls - not that in which the rain is made.

One of the common causes of rain is the cooling of humid air as it rises over a blockade. This obstruction may be a mountain but it is usually the cool dry air which has recently come from the north, accompanying a high pressure area. If, then, the humid air overrides this lower air rather suddenly and makes rain before the lower dry air has been pushed back northward to any extent, there will be no increase in humidity below before the rain. This type of rain production is a common one from now till spring. And as each low approaches we are likely to find our rain beginning while the air near the ground is still rather dry.

(Tomorrow: Mountains as Measuring Sticks)

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