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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHERE CLOUDS GO

The low daytime clouds of sunny days are short-lived. Formed at the top of some little ascending puff of hot air, they drift off with the wind, travelling perhaps not more than twenty miles before they evaporate or partly fall down as a shower. If you watch such clouds through dark glasses you will see that they are constantly changing. Little wisps of cloud may appear suddenly in a clear sky, thicken, then disappear again. Or a large cloud may be increasing in density at the center or evaporating around the edges.

Other types of clouds generally have longer lives. They do not depend on a single upthrust of a small mass of heated air. Large continuous ascending currents may produce a cloud of great thickness and large extent. The winds at the heights of the upper portions are usually much more rapid than those below, and carry the tops far in advance of the stormy region where most of the ascent is taking place. These clouds, drawn out and slowly evaporating, may travel several hundred or even a thousand miles before they finally disappear. A cloud originally a dense mass becomes drawn out into a tenuous sheet and finally merely white ribs and detached fibrous clouds remain.

As a storm area approaches we see the "clouds thicken" in the opposite sense to the process going on in each cloud. The nearer the storm approaches the denser are the clouds reaching us from it, for they have had less time to evaporate. Sooner or later every cloud, no matter how dense, will either evaporate or fall as some form of rain or snow.

(Tomorrow: Autumn Lows)

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