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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CUMULO-NIMBUS

A thunderstorm or cumulo-nimbus cloud has many different aspects. As a shower approaches from the west, at first only the top of the cloud, the dense rounded white "thunderheads", appears above the horizon. As the storm approaches and the cloud rises in the western sky, soon shutting off the sunlight, if it is late afternoon, it looks darker and darker. The denser and thicker the cloud the less light is able to penetrate it, and the darker its under surface appears. First comes the high, relatively thin advancing cloud sheet, then, about half way down, usually some intermediate, alto-stratus or flocculent alto-cumulus clouds. Much lower still is the heavy storm collar, the under-side in turbulent motion, marking the squall. Last comes the smooth-looking curtain of rain.

If you are in the center of the storm it often looks darker either to the north or south than to the west, and you think the storm is worse elsewhere. This is merely because a thunderstorm is often roughly lens-shaped, with the long axis north and south, therefore, in looking in these directions you are peering into the length of the storm rather than across it.

After the storm passes and it clears, the dense cloud appears as a brilliantly white towering mass in the east. It is white now, for the same reason that it was black when overhead. It reflects most of the sunlight that falls on it and allows little to penetrate. A distant thunderstorm, especially if to the north or south, appears in profile often as an anvil-shaped cloud, with a high forerunning top sheet.

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