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WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CLOUD WHIRLS AND CURLS

Clouds shoot points upwards sometimes with surprising rapidity, at speeds of 1,000 feet or more a minute. These may be tall narrow columns or rather sharp-pointed cloud trunks strongly suggestive of inverted tornado tails. The cloud trunk or hose usually does not go straight and sometimes bends back on itself, making a form something like a smoke ring blown from a locomotive. As they go to pieces they often take fantastic forms, suggestive of hobgoblins, birds or lizards, for example. These upshoots seem to be the result of local whirls developing within the cloud when strong upward motion is in progress.

Cloud curls are common features of the tops and sides of cumulus clouds. They are simply eddies marked by cloud material where the general wind strikes the more slowly moving rising air coming from the ground. Just as in water, where eddies take on rotary motions more rapid than the progress of the water, so in the air the cloud eddies have local velocities that are considerable. Beautiful large white curls may be seen to rise from the top of a cumulus cloud, even some miles away, break forward and disappear in a brief interval of a few minutes.

Cloud whirls and curls are merely visible samples of atmospheric turbulence that is continually occurring.

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