

Released on receipt
but intended for use
April 25, 1927

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed April 18, 1927

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University

FALLING CLOUDS

"When the clouds are upon the hills
They'll come down by the mills."

Clouds are usually so high above us that we cannot tell whether they are staying at the same level or falling. Such being the case, the use of falling clouds as weather prognostics is usually not feasible except in a mountain region. However, when clouds do give the appearance of descending, a plains dweller can use this indication to advantage at times.

Since clouds almost invariably mark air masses in which water vapor is at saturation and some of it condensed, a fall in the level of cloud formation means generally that an increase in humidity is taking place there. This is clearly seen toward sunset on a fair day when the late afternoon fall in temperature raises the relative humidity and thus allows clouds to form in rising air with less cooling than in early afternoon. The clouds descend a few hundred feet on the mountains, but usually disappear after sunset, when the humid updraft gives way to the dry downdraft characteristic of mountain slopes at night.

Except for this temporary descent, followed by evaporation, falling clouds indicate the approach of wet weather. If in the evening the descending mountain clouds do not disappear but continue to descend onto slopes and lower peaks, rain before morning is to be expected. A general damp wind must be dominating the situation.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE,
21st and B Sts.,
Washington, D.C.