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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"EVENING GRAY AND MORNING RED"

A gray sunset sky after a clear day is due to the presence of water drops in the air, and indicates conditions favorable for rain, since, unless the air were saturated to a considerable altitude with water vapor, the comparatively warm sunshine of the afternoon would favor evaporation rather than condensation of moisture. A gray sunrise sky has, as a general rule, just the opposite meaning. It often indicates the presence in the air of water drops formed on dust particles during the night, after the manner of dew, because the upper air has been dry enough to permit rapid radiation of heat from the dust. These drops will be speedily evaporated by the rising sun, and the general dryness of the atmosphere will not favor further condensation. Thus the proverb is justified:

"Evening red and morning gray
Help the traveler on his way;
Evening gray and morning red
Bring down rain upon his head."

There are many variations of this proverb. Here is a less familiar one:

"The skies being red at evening
Foreshewes a faire and cleare morning;
But if the morning riseth red,
Of wind and raine we shall be sped."

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