

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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GOETHE'S "WALL CLOUD"

Since Luke Howard at the beginning of the nineteenth century, devised his pioneer system of cloud classification, in which only seven types of cloud were recognized, a great many additions to the list have been proposed, and some of these are now generally accepted by meteorologists. One of the earliest of these suggestions was made in the year 1820 by Goethe. This many-sided genius was a dabbler in meteorology and was an enthusiastic admirer of Howard, in whose honor he wrote a poem and whose cloud nomenclature he discusses in his essay "Cloud Forms According to Howard". After describing the seven forms distinguished by the Englishman, he proceeds:

"So far Howard. If I were next to propose a term that seems to be still wanting, it would be Paries, the Wall. Paries is seen when streaky layers of cloud lie on the very end of the horizon so closely pressed over one another that no interval can be seen between them, shutting in the horizon up to a certain level and leaving the upper sky free. Sometimes their outline resembles a range of mountains, so that we fancy we see a distant mountain chain, and again they are seen to be in motion, as clouds and then a kind of cumulo-stratus is formed from them."

The clouds in question are apparently nothing but cumulus or stratocumulus, and no need of a special name for them has been felt by meteorologists.

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