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May 9, 1930.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 2, 1930.

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MOON WEATHER PROVERBS

Although the moon exercises no control over the weather, the appearance of this luminary is affected in certain ways by the state of the air and by the presence or absence of clouds, and these things, in turn, bear certain relations to approaching weather changes. Hence some of the old proverbs and rules connecting the moon with the weather contain an element of truth.

There is, for example, a widespread belief that moonlight is favorable to the occurrence of frosts. Moonlight itself has nothing to do with the temperature of the air, but the moon cannot shine unless the sky is clear, and a clear sky at night permits rapid loss of heat from the earth by radiation. The chilled earth cools the air near it; hence the absence of clouds that permits the moon to be seen is likewise a condition conducive to frost.

The proverb "Sharp horns do threaten windy weather" is explained by Dr. Humphreys in his "Weather Proverbs and Paradoxes." A fuzzy outline of the moon is due to temperature inequalities in the atmosphere, and such inequalities are decreased or entirely eliminated when the air is thoroughly mixed by strong winds. Hence, when the moon's horns appear sharp, these inequalities do not exist and the natural inference is that there are strong winds overhead, which may eventually blow at the earth's surface.

The common halo or luminous ring surrounding the moon when seen through cirro-stratus clouds is always of the same angular size--having a radius of about 22 degrees--but owing to an optical illusion it seems to be larger when the clouds are low than when they are high. The clouds forming halos stream out far in front of an advancing cyclonic storm, with its attendant rain area, and in general these clouds are higher the farther they are from the storm center. This explains the saying, "The bigger the ring, the nearer the wet."

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