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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed June 3, 1930.

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METEORS AND METEOROLOGY

Not all meteors are shooting stars. When Whittier says in "Snow-Bound,"

"In starry flake and pellicle
All day the hoary meteor fell,"

he is of course, writing of snow, which, according to an old-fashioned scientific classification, is one of the "aqueous meteors," others of which are rain, hail, dew, cloud, etc. According to the same classification, winds and storms are "aerial meteors," the optical phenomena of the atmosphere, such as rainbows and halos, are "luminous meteors," while lightning is classed as an "igneous meteor."

The word "meteor" comes from the Greek and means literally a thing that is raised aloft; i.e., above the ground. Aristotle, however, in his great work on meteorology includes among the "meteors" a wide range of natural phenomena that he supposed to have their location below the level of the stars but that were not all above the earth's surface. They include the milky way in one direction and earthquakes in the other. Most of them, however, belong to the atmosphere. Aristotle and many writers after him regarded shooting stars as one of the many kinds of meteor.

It is somewhat curious that while the word "meteor" is now, in the English-speaking world, and except in somewhat archaic language, applied exclusively to a shooting star, "meteorology" is applied exclusively to the science of the atmosphere. The branch of knowledge dealing with shooting stars is usually known as "meteoric astronomy."

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