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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 25, 1931

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ROARING MOUNTAINS

Recognition of the fact that certain mountains "roar" or make other characteristic sounds before a storm is both ancient and widespread. The mountains that produce these sounds are forested on or near their summits and their so-called roaring is really the murmur of the wind blowing through the trees and heard at points well to the leeward.

Pliny, in his "Natural History," mentions among the signs of a coming tempest "the reverberations of the mountains and the roaring of the forest." The same noise from the mountains is mentioned in "Paul and Virginia" as heralding the great storm that forms the culminating episode in that romance.

Carrick-on-Suir, in Ireland, is one of the places where the mountains give audible warning of stormy weather. In a case recently reported from that place the sound began about eight one morning and was then like the noise of a running motor. "It was," says the report, "persistent, unvarying except in the degree of loudness, and without anything like throbbing. In the afternoon its volume of sound was like that of the rush of a heavy train through a tunnel near by." The noise is known locally as "wind in the mountains," and it comes from the Comeragh range, a few miles to the southwest.

The scientific facts about "the murmur of the forest and the roar of the mountain" were fully set forth in the Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences for Feb. 19, 1923, by Dr. W. J. Humphreys. The sounds occur when the winds of an approaching "low" blow at right angles to a mountain range or crest. Because the upper layers of air move faster than the lower, the sound waves are bent downward and are roughly focussed in the region where the roaring is heard.

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