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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed May 4, 1932

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ARISTOTLE'S METEOROLOGY

Popular weather lore dates back to prehistoric times, but meteorology first achieved rank as a branch of formal knowledge when Aristotle, who flourished in the fourth century B.C., devoted to it one of the series of works in which he endeavored to round up all the scientific and philosophical learning of his age. His "Meteorologica" was well known in antiquity. Three Greek commentaries on it are still extant; viz., those of Alexander Aphrodisiensis (second century of our era), Olympiodorus (sixth century) and Joannes Philoponus (seventh century). With the fall of the Roman Empire, however, all of Aristotle's works, with the exception of his treatise on logic, were lost to the scholars of western Europe, but fortunately were preserved by the Arabs.

At the close of the twelfth century Latin versions of these works, translated from Arabic, appeared in Spain. From that time on until the rise of the modern sciences Aristotle was the supreme and unquestioned authority on all the subjects with which his works deal. His writings became the textbooks of the universities. The fact that they included a treatise on meteorology gave to that subject a prominence in the educational system of the middle ages that it would probably not otherwise have had. As Dr. Gustav Hellmann has pointed out, "It was Aristotle that was studied, not meteorology."

Early printed editions of the "Meteorologica" in both Greek and Latin were numerous, besides which there appeared a great number of commentaries and paraphrases. The first translation of the text into a modern language was an Italian version, published in 1555. Of other translations there is a recent one in English, by E.W. Webster. The latest edition of the Greek text, edited by F.H. Fobes, was published by the Harvard University Press in 1918.

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