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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 30, 1933

THE SIROCCO

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The famous sirocco (alias scirocco) of the Mediterranean region -- interest in which was renewed some years ago by Norman Douglas's captivating novel "South Winds" -- is not one wind but several. Almost any warm southerly or southeasterly wind blowing over the Mediterranean and the adjacent lands is likely to be called a sirocco, but while some of the breezes to which this name is applied are moist and muggy, others are excessively dry.

Siroccos are initially hot and dry because they blow from the strongly heated deserts of North Africa, and wherever they blow down mountain slopes before leaving the coast they are made still hotter and drier by the "foehn" process. In crossing the Mediterranean they absorb a great deal of moisture and reach leeward coasts to the north as damp winds. If, however, they cross mountains after reaching land, they are again heated and dried in descending the opposite slopes. Thus it happens that the sirocco of northern Sicily -- at Palermo, for example -- is extremely dry and dusty.

The sirocco, whether damp or dry, paralyzes thought and lets down morale. The Italians say of a dull book, "Era scritto in tempo del sirocco" -- "It was written during the sirocco."

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