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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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BEES AS BAROMETERS

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

Bees are good prophets of rain, but the popular belief that a bee is never caught in a shower exaggerates the insect's prophetic ability. There has just appeared in England a somewhat comprehensive paper on the relations of bees to weather, by W. Herrod Hemsall, technical adviser on bee-keeping to the British Ministry of Agriculture, who says on the subject above mentioned:

"As a rule the honey-bee is a good barometer and seems to have an uncanny intuition of the approach of thunderstorms. It is not unusual for the bees to be observed returning in myriads to their home, covering the alighting board in a seething mass and rushing helter-skelter over one another in order to get indoors quickly, while no members of the community come forth. Although the sun may be shining and to the human eye no sign of a change is apparent, yet within half an hour of such an incident there occurs a thunderstorm.

"The bee is not infallible, and on occasions large numbers, through a belated return, are dashed to the ground and drowned, or even drowned while working on the flowers, through such a storm. In any case the work is retarded by storms, through many bees returning with either a partial or no load of nectar. Even the approach of clouds without rain will cause a cessation of work in the fields."

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