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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CLASSIFYING THE CLOUDS

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Ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century weathermen have been trying to devise a completely satisfactory classification of cloud forms, but the results of these endeavors up to the present time are disappointing. The classification now nominally accepted by official weather services throughout the world is set forth in a work called "International Atlas of Clouds and of States of the Sky," prepared by an international commission and published in Paris.

In this system all cloud forms are classified according to a plan imitated from that employed by science in classifying animals and plants. They are grouped first of all in four "families"; viz, A, high clouds; B, middle clouds; C, low clouds; D, clouds with vertical development. Each family contains two or three "genera." Family A, for example, contains the genera Cirrus, Cirrocumulus and Cirrostratus. The genera are subdivided into "species," which, as in the biological system, bear double names; the name of the genus being followed by the name of the species. Thus Cirrus includes Cirrus filosus, Cirrus uncinus, Cirrus densus, etc.

Certain modifications that occur in more than one genus are arbitrarily described in the international system as "varieties," though, unlike the varieties of zoology and botany, they are not subdivisions of species. Thus a lense-shaped form of Cirrus is called Cirrus lenticularis and is considered a variety merely because lenticular forms also occur in the other genera. These so-called varieties would be called species by a biologist.

Lastly certain appendages --- such as the dangling trails seen below some clouds and known as "virga" --- are styled "casual details."

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