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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ABOVE A THUNDERCLOUD

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Though travel above the lower clouds is common nowadays, aeronauts do not often go over the tops of the towering cloud masses of a thunderstorm. John Wise, greatest of American balloonists, did so long before the aeroplane was invented, and the following description of what he saw is given in his book "Through the Air," published in 1873:

"A very beautiful scene in cloudland is spread out to one aloft when sailing directly above a thundercloud. The watery mass is brilliantly illuminated by the sunlight -- indeed, its brilliant whiteness, as dazzling as snow, is painful to the eyes. And then it heaves and rolls about like the boisterous ocean. Ever and anon the vapor is suddenly projected upward above the general cloud level like a great volcanic cone, followed by a discharge of electricity, dancing across it like diamonds upon a snowbank. This as suddenly melts it down again, and then follows a dash of rain that sends back to the ear a sound resembling a cataract. The report of these electrical discharges, as heard above the cloud, is not of that deep, sonorous, rumbling sound, but of a snarling crash like the report of a rifle. These stormclouds when in active operation present on their upper side the appearance of a great bubbling, boiling caldron of snow, not at all dreadful and dark, as seen from below by the observer on the earth, but of so soft and downy an aspect as seemingly to invite a plunge into their midst."

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