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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
of Clark University,
Describes

THE AFTERGLOW

The afterglow is the reflection of sunlight from distant high clouds, some time after sunset. It is best seen about this time of year when the sun is farthest north, and is most pronounced in high latitudes where the sun's path in setting forms the smallest angle with the horizon. In the tropics, the sun drops out of sight so abruptly that it goes down, as it comes up, "like thunder," and twilight is of short duration.

After sunset, in latitudes of the northern United States and southern Canada, twilight lasts for some time; so does the afterglow on any nearby clouds that may be present. Last of all, an hour or an hour and a half after sunset there may be seen at times a band of light low in the northwest reflected from cirrus clouds perhaps five miles high and 100 miles away. Only with this special lighting, when the rest of the sky is nearly dark, are clouds at such a distance usually visible. This faint light, more concentrated and apparently brighter than the weakly diffused twilight immediately preceding its appearance, constitutes the afterglow. It is of brief duration, in ten or fifteen minutes, perhaps, it is gone, and the last of daylight has disappeared.

(Tomorrow: Calm at Sunset)

Science Service,
B and 21st Sts.,
Washington, D. C.