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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
Secretary, American Meteorological Society,
Tells of:

HEAT AND THE CRICKET'S BEAT

The cricket chants and the ant runs faster or slower as the mercury goes up or down. Dr. Harlow Shapley, director of the Harvard College Observatory, learned how to get air temperature to within one degree Fahrenheit by timing the speed of ants. The higher the temperature, the higher was the speed. Another observer worked out a schedule by which he claimed he could tell with some approach to accuracy the reading of the thermometer by counting the pulsation of the cricket chorus. On a very hot night the beat would ascend to nearly 125 a minute. A sudden change in weather, lowering the mercury, would bring with it a corresponding slackening of the chant. It has been counted as low as 60 to the minute following the cooling effect of a thunderstorm, where a little while before, with the mercury hovering in the 80s, it was 120.

The cricket is also credited with singing much louder as a storm approaches, but this is ascribed not to the vocal power of the insect, but to the fact that sound comes more clearly to the ear because of locally homogeneous atmospheric conditions which usually immediately precede foul weather.

(Tomorrow: Where Mercury Never Changes.)

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