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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE CHEMICAL WEATHER GLASS

The so-called chemical "weather glass" or "barometer" which is sometimes mounted on the same board with a thermometer does not really indicate either atmospheric pressure or the coming weather. It consists usually of a glass tube containing a saturated solution of nitrate of potash, camphor and ammonium chloride in alcohol. As the tube is hermetically sealed, obviously its contents cannot be affected by changes in air pressure. The amount or position of crystals in the solution really depends upon temperature changes and therefore affords no satisfactory basis for making a forecast. The thermometer itself of course tells the temperature much more accurately than its companion, the useless "weather glass".

The action of "cottage barometer", in which one or the other of two figures comes out of a little house, depends not upon pressure or temperature, but upon humidity variations. The coming weather cannot be guessed from dampness or dryness of the air alone. So, too, little dolls with skirts that turn blue or pink according to the amount of moisture present fail to be satisfactory forecasters.

The classic mule barometer seems worthy of mention and certainly has some claim to reliability. A picture of a mule with a string tail is hung up outdoors. The directions read:

If tail is dry.....Fair
" " " wet.....Rain
" " " swinging.....Windy
" " " wet and swinging..Stormy
" " " frozen.....Cold

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