

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt  
but intended for use  
May 5, 1926

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed April 28, 1926

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RECORDING NIGHT CLOUDINESS

An alto-stratus cloud that will let through 50 per cent. of the sunshine, says Dr. A. Angstrom, will stop 80 to 90 per cent. of the outgoing radiation from the earth. Obviously, such a cloud is more likely to keep night temperatures up than to hold day temperatures down.

Desirable though night cloudiness records are, few observers care to stay up all night to get them, and automatic devices have not come into widespread use. Weather Bureau observers note the character of sunset and sunrise, and observe the cloudiness at least at 8 p. m. and with the aid of other informal observations make an estimate of the probable cloudiness through the night. At the central office of the U.S. Weather Bureau the cloudiness is noted by night watchmen.

Apparently the only automatic records of night cloudiness made in North America are taken at the Blue Hill Observatory of the Harvard University and at the U.S. Weather Bureau station of the University of Chicago. The instruments used are modified Pickering Pole-Star photographic recorders. As the earth turns, the Pole-Star and others within the field of the camera trace arcs of circles while the sky remains clear. An alarm clock opens the shutter after sunset, and closes it before sunrise. A similar night cloudiness recorder is in use at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, England.

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