A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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PLANETS AND WEATHER

It would be very pleasant indeed if the weather forecaster could take his cue from the sky map and forecast the weather with the same accuracy with which the astronomer predicts the position of heavenly bodies. A little calculation is sufficient to show the futility of such a hope. In a recent book on weather vagaries, Dr. W. J. Humphreys examines the sometimes alleged influences of the planets upon our weather.

In the first place, what is known about the magnetic effects of the planets? Laboratory tests show that the atmosphere does not respond appreciably to a magnetic field a thousand times stronger than that of the planets. In fact, the combined electrical pull or push of all the seven planets would make one cubic meter of air move but one thousandth of an inch in 435,000 years.

Could the planets affect us by making an atmospheric tide? The moon makes an air, as well as a water tide, but this tide is negligible, as it does not change the height of the barometer by more than one thousandth of an inch. The planets would cause an atmospheric tide only one-ten thousandth as great as that produced by the moon.

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