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September 1, 1927

A SCIENCE SERVICE FEATURE

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed August 25, 1927

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MEASURING THE BLUE OF THE SKY

In the year 1790 H. B. de Saussure, a Swiss physicist, devised an instrument called a "cyanometer" for measuring the blueness of the sky. It consisted of 53 colored surfaces, ranging through a series of shades from white through deeper and deeper tones of blue to jet black. The surfaces were numbered in order. In using this instrument the observer selected the surface agreeing most nearly in color with the part of the sky under observation and recorded the corresponding number denoting the blueness of the sky at that point. In general the blueness increases from the horizon to the zenith.

Several more or less similar instruments have since been introduced for the same purpose. Recently Dr. Franz Linke, of Frankfort-on-the-Main, prepared sets of color cards including 14 tints, ranging from almost white to a very dark blue. These were distributed to 17 official meteorological services in different parts of the world for the purpose of securing comparable observations of sky blueness.

A set supplied to the United States Weather Bureau has been used at the American University, in Washington, since January 1926. A preliminary report of the results shows, among other things, that there is a very close relation between the blueness of the sky and the range of horizontal visibility. There is also a close relation between sky and the number of days since the occurrence of rain. The bluest skies prevail immediately after rain has fallen.

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