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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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## HUMAN BAROMETERS

The health and comfort of many people seem to be affected in a rather striking degree by the passage of the barometric depressions and areas of high pressure that alternate at intervals of a few days in the temperate zones. These effects are probably not due directly to changes of pressure but rather to the accompanying changes in other meteorological conditions. The late Dr. Weir Mitchell, who was a pioneer student of such phenomena, wrote of "a neuralgic belt, within which, as it sweeps along in advance of the storm, prevail in the hurt and maimed limbs of men, in the tender nerves and rheumatic joints, renewed torments called into existence by the stir and perturbation of the elements."

The fluctuations of temperature, humidity and wind that attend the passage of barometric highs and lows would seem, by virtue of their effects on the heat-regulating mechanism of the body and consequent reactions upon the nervous system in general, to supply an ample explanation of the unpleasant symptoms noted in the case of sensitive people; conditions to which the collective name of "cyclonopathy" has been given by European investigators. Some authorities have, however, invoked in this connection possible effects of atmospheric electricity, and pointed to the extreme sensitiveness of many persons to the approach of thunderstorms; a condition which Dr. G. M. Beard has described under the name of "astraphobia". The human organism is the seat of various electrical phenomena and these can hardly be independent of changes in the electrical state of the atmosphere, but to what extent the results may be registered by human sensations is a debatable question.

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