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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE WORD "BAROMETER"

The word "barometer" is supposed to have been introduced by the Honorable Robert Boyle, the English physicist, in the year 1665 as the name of an instrument that had previously been generally known, from the name of its inventor, as "Torricelli's tube". Barometers were used for measuring the weight of the air some years before they began to be used as a means of predicting the weather, and the term devised by Boyle means nothing more than "weight-measure". So far as etymology goes, it might have been as appropriately applied to any other weighing instrument; a pair of scales, for example.

Later the barometer came to be used chiefly as a weather-predicting instrument, and when certain other instruments, which do not weigh air or anything else, were devised for a similar purpose it is not strange that they were often described as "barometers". Thus a glass tube containing crystals of saltpeter and sal ammoniac in a camphor solution and popularly supposed to be a weather-indicator is known as the "camphor barometer". A "barometer flower" is an artificial flower that changes color with changes in the humidity of the atmosphere.

We even hear of "human barometers", who are sensitive to coming weather changes, and "business barometers", which tell us whether times are good or bad in the commercial world.

Thus do words wander from their literal meanings.

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