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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE WEATHER HOUSE

The "weather house", in which dwell the little man and the little woman who display diametrically opposite tastes in the matter of weather, is the most familiar weather toy in the world. The figures stand on a wooden platform suspended in the middle by a string of twisted catgut. This substance absorbs moisture readily from the atmosphere. In doing so, the string is shortened and tends to untwist. When the air grows dry the string lengthens and tends to twist again. Hence the movements of the platform. Thus the device serves as a crude hygroscope.

The invention of the weather-house has generally been ascribed to Jacob Leupold, of Leipzig, who made these toys as early as 1720. A manuscript dating from the early fifteenth century, found some years ago in Germany, contains a drawing which has been thought by some authorities to represent a similar device, but there is no certainty on this point.

The first edition of John Claridge's "Shepherd of Banbury's Rules to Judge of the Changes of the Weather", published in London in 1744, describes weather-houses as having been sold in England some years previously.

The English call the little figures of the weather-house "Jocky and Jenny".

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