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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SOME NEEDED CLIMATIC DATA

When an engineer wishes to describe the performance of an air-conditioning and air-cooling plant, as installed in a theater, public building or the like, he states that the "effective temperature" has been maintained at a certain point. He does not describe the state of the air in terms of ordinary temperature, as read from a thermometer, because this datum is a poor indication of indoor comfort. The latter depends upon the cooling power of the air, which is controlled by three things -- temperature, humidity and air movement. The effective temperature is supposed to express the combined effects of these things on human sensations of comfort.

The effective temperature is usually obtained by first reading a thermometer, a hygrometer and a wind-gauge and then referring to a "comfort chart," but instruments have been devised for measuring the cooling power of the air directly. One of these, the katathermometer, has been in use for many years. A newer one, the frigorimeter, invented in Switzerland, is said to be more accurate and convenient.

Travelers, health-seekers and many other people who consult statistics of climate generally wish to learn, above all, whether the atmospheric conditions that normally prevail at a certain time and place are comfortable. Since this information is not furnished by temperature records, statistics of atmospheric comfort ought to be -- and probably soon will be -- included in climatic literature, from which they are now conspicuously lacking.

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