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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 16, 1932

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THE STORM GLASS

Storm glasses have become so rare in recent times that they probably fetch good prices in the antique shops. One that I bought long ago in a country store, where it had been awaiting a purchaser for years, is labeled on the back of the frame "The Cottage Barometer or Storm Glass"; which dual name leads to the remark that the device in question has also been called a "camphor-glass," "camphor barometer," "paroscope," etc. It consists of a vertical tube containing partly dissolved crystals, which change from time to time in appearance and are supposed to furnish indications of coming weather. In some specimens the tube is hermetically sealed; in others it is open at the top to the air. My storm glass carries the following "directions":

1st. If the weather is to be fine, the substance of the composition will remain at the bottom and the liquid will be clear.

2d. Previous to rain, the substance will rise gradually and the liquid will be clear, with small particles moving about.

3d. Before a storm or high wind the substance will be partly at the top and will have a feathery appearance, and the liquid will be heavy and in fermentation. In this it will usually give notice 24 hours before the weather changes.

4th. In winter generally the substance will rise rather high; in snowy weather or white frost it will be white with small stars in motion.

5th. In summer, the weather being warm and dry, the substance will be quite low.

6th. To know which quarter the wind or storm comes from, you will observe the substance will lie closer to the bottle on the opposite side to that from which the storm or wind comes.

Admiral FitzRoy, once head of the meteorological service of Great Britain, set great store by the storm glass, kept one attached to his barometer, and consulted it when he made his forecasts, but an investigation of the device carried out by Charles Tomlinson in the 'sixties of the last century indicated that the appearance of the liquid depends almost entirely upon temperature. It is merely a crude thermometer and of no value whatever to the weather forecaster.

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