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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE HUMATAGRAPH

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Substances that absorb moisture from the air are described as "hygroscopic," and many of them -- some animal and some vegetable -- have been used to operate hygrometers and hygroscopes, which indicate atmospheric humidity. Human hairs are most often used for this purpose. A hair, treated to remove oil or grease, lengthens when the humidity of the air increases and shortens when the air grows drier. A defect of the "hair hygrometer" is that several hairs must be used for the sake of strength and the different hairs respond in different degrees to humidity changes.

A new hygrometer, called the "humatagraph," has been devised in England by C. L. Burdick. It is well known that as pine cones dry out, the scales or bracts are lifted and the seeds are thereby released. Mr. Burdick noticed that cones several years old react to variations in moisture as sensitively as do young cones. A strip of fibre from the outer layer of a pine bract is used to operate the dial of his instrument. Besides retaining its sensitiveness to moisture changes, the inventor claims for this material that its linear expansion is about three times that of hair, that it is practically non-elastic and that, for some reason not clear, it does not accumulate dust.

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