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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WATCHING A BALLOON GO

Sometimes, when you are returning from the circus a tragedy occurs. Your little girl forgets to hold onto the thread of her toy balloon and away it sails, drifting with the wind and disappearing into the sky. The little girl probably fails to appreciate the educational possibilities of such a balloon ascension. But the Weather Bureau frequently releases small pilot-balloons to find the direction and speed of winds aloft. On days when there are plenty of clouds at various levels, the clouds are satisfactory wind indicators, at other times balloons are helpful. It is interesting to send up a balloon when a thunderstorm is near at hand. At first the rising balloon will move away from the main cloud mass; then when it gets a little higher, perhaps only 200 or 300 feet, it will generally reverse its direction and start rapidly upward and towards the storm. Under the heavy cloud a stream of cool air is brought down with the rain. This cool thin air current spreads out along the ground usually in the direction the storm is traveling. The warm air which it displaces flows back as a counter current just above it. It is this upper inflow which supplies the vapor for condensation in the storm and which sometimes carries unwary aviators or balloonists into a dangerous thunderstorm.

(Tomorrow: "A Cool Dry Place")

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