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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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BARGAINING WITH THE WEATHERMAN

At the Colombo Observatory, in Ceylon, efforts are made to recover the pilot-balloons that are set free and observed as long as possible with a theodolite for the purpose of measuring the winds aloft. These balloons are, according to British custom, provided with tails, and to the tail of each is attached a notice in English, Sinhalese and Tamil, offering a reward of one rupee (32 cents) for the return of the balloon. This plan has produced fairly good results, though of course many balloons are lost in the jungle or at sea.

A.J. Bamford, superintendent of the observatory, says that it is not unusual for letters in connection with the return of the balloons to contain information concerning the circumstances and character of the finder, leading up to a request for a further cash payment or a post in the observatory. Recently he received a letter, written in Sinhalese, of which the translation runs as follows:

"A piece of black paper bearing No. 720, to which is pasted a printed notice in English, Sinhalese and Tamil, another paper attached by a wire, and a rubber balloon have been found by us. A reward of one rupee is not sufficient. If the superintendent of the observatory will advertise in the Dinamina newspaper in rather large letters an offer of a hundred pounds, we will inform him where and when these were found."

The best part of the story is that balloon No. 720 had already been returned to the observatory and the regular reward had been duly paid for it.

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