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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TELEGRAPHIC WEATHER CODES

The reports of observations taken at meteorological stations from which daily weather maps are drawn are telegraphed in code, in order to save expense and expedite transmission. In most countries the codes employed for this purpose consist of groups of figures, some of which represent the actual numerical values of the elements reported while others are arbitrary. The United States Weather Bureau and the Canadian Meteorological Service use a word code, which offers the advantage over a figure code that, as a rule, mistakes in the telegrams can easily be detected by anybody familiar with it.

This American weather code is something of a literary curiosity. In each of the many thousand words it contains there are certain significant letters, and these must fall in certain sequences in order to convey the information desired. The English language has been ransacked -- and somewhat stretched -- to secure the necessary words. Observers consult the code book in coding a message, but decoding is easily done without the book by those who have mastered the relatively simple principles on which the code is constructed.

Here are a few of the outlandish words found in the code book: Cutduck, ceggick, cinfoot, vamab, kongelf, kisfal, lugkoxe, bosset, omish, melmy, murmish. There are plenty more equally suggestive of Lewis Carroll.

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