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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE FLYING WEATHERMAN

Though meteorologists have been exploring the air overhead on a world-wide scale for many years, they have not, as a rule, made personal ascents into the sky but have merely sent up kites or balloons with self-registering instruments attached or have observed the drift of pilot-balloons from the ground with the aid of theodolites. During the past decade, however, the aeroplane has assumed a more and more important place in meteorology.

At many places in the Old World and at a few naval air stations in the United States routine observations of atmospheric conditions aloft - especially temperature, humidity and cloudiness - are now taken by aviators, daily or oftener, so far as it is possible to make flights. As compared with the older practice of measuring upper-air conditions by means of kites, the use of the aeroplane is a great time-saver, and the data can be obtained quickly enough to be of much value to weather forecasters.

In the ordinary process of sending up pilot-balloons for observing air currents aloft, a strong wind often carries the balloon horizontally beyond the range of observation before a great height is reached. If, however, the balloon is carried up in an aeroplane it can be released at any desired height immediately over the point of observation, and its drift at still greater altitudes can then be observed from the ground. This plan has been successfully followed in England.

Aeroplanes are also used for making dust-counts in the upper air, for photographing the clouds from above and in various other kinds of meteorological research.

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