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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SNOW BELOW RAIN

The aviator of today encounters some strikingly contrasted varieties of weather when climbing or descending through the air, but no experiences of this sort are more interesting than some of those described by James Glaisher in the accounts of his classic balloon ascents, made in England in the sixties of the last century. In one case he was descending from a height of 18,000 feet through clouds, and at the lower level of the latter, 16,000 feet above the earth, heavy rain fell pattering on the balloon. Of the next stage of descent Glaisher writes:

"On passing below 14,000 feet and for a space of nearly 5,600 feet we passed through a beautiful snowy scene. There were no flakes in the air; the snow was entirely composed of spiculae of ice, of cross spiculae at angles of 60 degrees, and an innumerable number of snow crystals, small in size, but distinct and of well-known forms easily recognizable as they fell and remained on the coat. This unexpected meeting with snow on a summer afternoon was all that was needed on this occasion to complete the experience of the characteristics of extreme heat of summer with the cold of winter within the range of a few hours. On passing below the snow, we entered a murky atmosphere, which continued until we reached the ground."

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