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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A KIPLING WIND NAME

It is a remarkable and little known fact that many hundreds of local names are applied to winds in various parts of the world. On the Italian and Swiss lakes, for example, scores of these names are in use, and as a rule each name is peculiar to a single lake. The Dutch East Indies are rich in local wind names. Collecting such names and tracing their histories is a fascinating hobby - the cultivation of which has long helped reconcile the present writer to mundane existence.

Comparatively few of the names in question are found in English dictionaries, though most of them turn up sooner or later in English literature. Here is an interesting case:

In one of Kipling's best known tales, "The Man Who Would Be King," you may read: "The loo, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees." Anybody who is well up in dictionaries will turn to Yule & Burnell's "Hobson-Jobson" for a definition of "loo," but will not find it there. I know of nothing in print about this word, but I have a letter written years ago by Mrs. S.A. Hill, the widow of a well-known Anglo-Indian meteorologist, which says:

"The word 'loo' is commonly used in the Punjab and the United Provinces for the hot wind that blows so fiercely in May and June. It is an aboriginal and purely Indian word..... The story of 'The Man Who Would Be King' was put on paper at my desk at Belvedere House, Allahabad, while Mr. Hill and I sat in the room; sheet by sheet was passed over to us to read even before the ink was dry, and at luncheon that day we had given the names to the characters."

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