

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 11, 1932.

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JOKING ABOUT THE WEATHER MAN

Joking at the expense of the weather prophet seems to be a universal custom. This remark is suggested by an experience of C.P. Skrine, an officer of the Indian Political Service. Describing his travels among the Damanis of Persian Baluchistan, Mr. Skrine said last year in a lecture:

"The Damanis are cheerful villains, when not too much on their guard. I was surprised at being asked suddenly by one of them whether we, the British, had mullahs who told us when it was going to rain. Thinking of my friend the government meteorologist at Simla, I replied that we had. 'Does he always prophesy correctly?' they asked. I was obliged to admit that even the meteorological experts were sometimes wrong. This reply was passed round in dialect and received with much chuckling by those present. 'What are you laughing about?' I asked. Pointing to a sheepish-looking old graybeard in a huge turban, my questioner explained: 'This is our mullah. He's always praying for rain and telling us it is coming, but he's NEVER right!'"

Even scientific men joke about scientific weather forecasts. The late F.W. Clarke, of the U.S. Geological Survey, made delightful fun of the U.S. Weather Bureau's predictions in his "Rhyme of the Rain Machine," and no harm was done. Until weather prediction becomes absolutely infallible -- if it ever does -- it will probably continue to be the subject of good-natured jesting.

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