

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE FIRST STORM SIGNALS

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Signals displayed at seaports to warn mariners of expected storms are now a familiar sight all over the world, but their history extends back only to the year 1847, when the earliest system of displaying such signals was established by Lt. Col. (later Major General Sir) William Reid, of the Royal Engineers, at Carlisle Bay, Barbados, where that famous pioneer cyclonologist was then stationed. An official notice issued at the time in regard to them reads as follows:

"A barometer is kept and registered at the principal police station at Bridgetown, Barbados, and notice will be given to the captain of the port when it falls. On the captain of the port rests the responsibility of causing signals to be hoisted, that the barometer indicates bad weather. One ball at the masthead of the signal-posts is to signify that the barometer is falling, and should be carefully watched. If the barometer continues to fall, and the weather appears threatening, a second ball will be hoisted at the masthead. As the indications of the weather become alarming, these two balls will be gradually lowered, until they are only half-mast high.

"As soon as the barometer begins to rise again, the two balls will begin to be slowly rehoisted, so as to be again at the masthead when the barometer shall have risen one-tenth of an inch. When the barometer shall have risen two-tenths of an inch, then one ball will be taken off, and the other be left until the storm shall have passed over."

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