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SOME ASPECTS OF THE EARLY WORK OF
H. F. BLANFORD AND SIR JOHN ELIOT ON
PRESSURE DISTURBANCES OVER THE
INDIAN LAND AREA - 1867 TO 1893

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1. INTRODUCTION

Blanford and Eliot were founder members of the India Meteorological Department and it is therefore largely to their work to which one must turn in order to obtain a picture of the early years of the history of meteorology in India. To-day these two workers are chiefly remembered for three works, *The rainfall of India* (Blanford 1

also occurred at high elevation, and the disturbances appeared to move outwards at the surface, and therefore being unable to accept a European or even Atlantic origin (because this would have required a southerly path at some point), he was thrown back upon the only other source of possible energy; the so called anti-trades. It is possible that Blanford realised that Eliot was going to utilise the anti-trade theory in this memoir for there is an interesting paper, written a year before his death in 1892, on the winter storms of northern India, in which Blanford states that 'we must clearly distinguish between barometric depressions which appear like the trough of a great atmospheric wave of great extent both in longitude and latitude and the vortex, which is as a rule merely a local and subordinate feature of the former' (op cit. p. 492). Was Blanford making his position clear to Eliot and to other meteorologists as to his rejection of the anti-monsoon theory? It may never be known, but we may ponder over a verse of poetry which Blanford quoted in this last of all his meteorological papers:

These fair tales we know so beautiful,
Show only finer than our lives to-day
Because their voice was clearer and they found
A sacred bard to sing them (Lewis).

Eliot with this memoir completed a trilogy, the 1885 monsoon depression memoir, the 1890 cyclonic storm handbook and the 1893 account of western disturbances. Each in their way had something new and original to say, none are without interest to-day, and all are monuments to the early days of the India Meteorological Department. To compare his work with that of Blanford would be impossible; the two men stand as complementary to each other. Both were pioneers in a field, which until their coming, was more notable for climatological fictions, than meteorological facts.

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