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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,  
Secretary, American Meteorological Society,  
tells of:

ARTIFICIAL THUNDERSTORMS

Thunderstorms often form in connection with great forest fires and over volcanoes. The intense heat so expands the air that it is forced up rapidly by the heavier air near by. As it ascends, it cools, following the natural law. The hot air and smoke, if there is enough moisture, eventually reach a height where condensation of water vapor begins, and a cumulus cloud forms, soon followed by the towering cumulo-nimbus, or thundercloud. The effect is the same as that of a day of extreme heat in summer, when the air is still and humidity high. In this way a forest fire may create the deluge which extinguishes it. Storms formed by the heat of volcanoes are sometimes of terrific violence, and are a cause of the deluges of hot mud that sometimes overwhelm villages and cities.

The story is told of a party of engineers working in a Florida wilderness with negroes as helpers. There had been a drought and it was exceedingly hot. The negroes becoming somewhat unruly and not caring to cut through a sawgrass swamp, the engineers determined to impress them and announced that they would create a cooling thunderstorm. The jungle of tall grass with its several feet of accumulated dry matter was fired, and presently the great volume of highly heated air which ascended caused cumulus clouds to form, which grew rapidly into thunderclouds, and lightning began to flash and thunder to roll and torrents of rain to descend. The engineers had no further trouble with their help.

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(Tomorrow: Lightning Rods)

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