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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE COLOR OF LIGHTNING

Lightning flashes sometimes appear white, sometimes pink or rosy, and in rare instances, red. The red or pink flashes are supposed to be caused by the presence of hydrogen. It is thought that the lightning discharge may dissociate some of the water in its path into its elements, oxygen and hydrogen. The pink light is that of luminous hydrogen which has many red hues in its spectrum.

Sometimes the pink or red hue is due, not to hydrogen, but merely to atmospheric absorption. Distant lightning may appear red, just as the sun or moon look red when near the horizon. For smoke or dust particles in the air will absorb light of short wave lengths, and allow that of long wave lengths, orange or red, to pass through.

The white lightning is owing to the light from the oxygen and nitrogen of the atmosphere. Together these substances cover rather evenly all colors of the spectrum and therefore produce white light.

(Tomorrow: Gutters and Sewers for Downpours)

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