

No. 627

A Science Service Feature

May 15

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks  
of Clark University.

NUMBER OF THUNDERSTORMS

Sixteen million thunderstorms a year or 44,000 a day is the average quota for the earth, according to an enterprising compiler. He further estimates the average duration of a thunderstorm as an hour, making about 1800 thunderstorms in progress in different parts of the world at any moment. Lightning flashes during a storm may average 200 an hour. Even if the true figures should be but half these estimates they would be impressive enough.

All this is not particularly consoling to nervous persons who do not enjoy thunderstorms. Not all sections of the world are equally favored, however. In the tropics, thunderstorms are most frequent, in places occurring so regularly that people say "Meet me after the rain", when making a late afternoon appointment. The frigid zones and arid regions elsewhere rarely experience thunderstorms and are to be recommended as retreats for the fearful. In the United States, San Jose, California, with an average of but one a year, has the least for any regular Weather Bureau station. Other Pacific coast stations have but two. In Alaska, however, but 8 of 57 stations average over one thunderstorm per year; and at one, Attu, the farthest of the Aleutian Islands, lightning was seen but once in seven years, and there is no record of thunder having been heard there.

-----  
(Tomorrow: Beware of Sunburn)

All rights reserved by Science Service

SCIENCE SERVICE,  
B and 21st Sts.,  
Washington, D.C.