

No. 632

A Science Service Feature

May 21

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DISTANCE THUNDER CAN BE HEARD

It is sometimes asked why thunder cannot be heard nearly as far as heavy canonading, although it produces a greater atmospheric disturbance. Thunder will not carry much more than 15 miles, generally less, while cannon fire is sometimes heard 150 miles away. Dr. W. J. Humphreys has pointed out two differences. With cannon fire the noise all starts from one point, while with thunder the energy is not concentrated, but is spread over the whole path of the lightning. Again, as everyone has observed, the air varies greatly in its ability to conduct sound. Distant sounds are heard most plainly when the lower air is still and stratified. This may be the condition during cannon fire, but never during a thunderstorm. In a thunderstorm, the air is turbulent, both temperature and moisture distribution is irregular, and sound waves are likely to be dissipated.

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(Tomorrow: Storms make most radio static)

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