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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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MYSTERIOUS SOUNDS THAT HAUNT THE AIR

Of all the sounds that haunt the air probably the most mysterious are those that are best called by the generic name "brontides" (coined from two Greek words meaning "like thunder"), though they rejoice in scores of other names in various parts of the world. Brontides are muffled detonations, resembling the sound of distant cannon or peals of thunder, and are heard chiefly in warm, clear weather.

There is a reference in one of Lord Bacon's works to "an extraordinary noise in the sky when there is no thunder". Probably a search of other early literature would reveal many notices of mysterious rumblings and explosive sounds such as we should now describe as brontides. The first systematic investigation of these noises was made in India, where they have frequently been reported from the neighborhood of Barisal, a town in the Ganges delta, and are known locally as "Barisal guns". Along the coast of Belgium brontides are called "mistpoeffers". They are well known in many parts of Italy under numerous names. In Australia they are called "desert sounds", in Haiti "gouffre", etc. The "Moodus noises" often heard in the eighteenth century about Moodus and East Haddam, Connecticut, probably belong to the same category.

The source of these sounds is undoubtedly subterranean in a great many cases, though perhaps not in all. It is thought that slight movements of the rocks, such as would be inaudible under ordinary circumstances may give rise to noises when the atmospheric vibrations are reenforced in some way by the configuration of the ground. The explosion of unseen meteorites may account for some brontides, while others may be the sounds of thunder, cannonading, blasting, etc., heard at abnormal distances because of the refraction of the sound waves by the atmosphere.

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