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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE VALUE OF LIGHTNING RODS

The United States Bureau of Standards has recently published some interesting evidence of the value of lightning rods, deduced from reports of fire marshals and insurance companies in the United States and Canada, in which the losses on rodded and unrodded buildings have been separated.

Most fire losses from lightning occur in rural districts. The proportion of farm buildings equipped with lightning rods is not definitely known, except in the state of Iowa, where a careful estimate indicates about 50 per cent. During the period 1919-1921, 28 rodded buildings in Iowa were destroyed by lightning, with losses amounting to \$87,979. In the same period 503 other buildings in the state were destroyed by lightning, and the losses were \$1,060,668. Thus the value of the rodded buildings destroyed was only 7.7 per cent. of the total, although the number exposed to lightning hazards was about 50 per cent. Very similar conditions probably prevail over the greater part of the mid-western United States, where it is believed that about half of the farm buildings, at least of the better class, are protected by rods.

The Bureau, in summing up the evidence available, reaches the conclusion that the chance of an unrodded farm building being destroyed by lightning appears to be about 57 times as great as that of a rodded building.

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