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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed May 29, 1930

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CURIOUS THUNDER

An unusual case of thunder in the zenith without visible lightning is described in a book of the last century by Charles Tomlinson. In September, 1857, the writer was staying at a small village in Rhenish Prussia. The weather had been hot and the skies generally clear for some weeks. One day, when the sun was screened for a time by clouds, he took a walk in the surrounding country.

While sitting at the foot of a tree reading, his attention was repeatedly disturbed by what appeared to be the irregular firing of musketry, as though a line of soldiers had discharged their muskets in succession, and the fact that the soldiers had actually been exercising in the neighborhood seemed to account for the phenomenon.

"But presently," he says, "the supposed firing was heard exactly overhead, and on looking upwards a cloud was observed, of no great extent, in which a series of rapid explosions was taking place. The cloud floated alone in the sky, which had in other parts become bright and clear. The cloud was evidently discharging itself into another cloud above it, but the lightning was too faint to be seen. The explosions would continue for about five minutes, then cease for a few minutes, and begin again. The cloud gradually disappeared. The fine weather continued for some days longer, but transient thunderstorms had occurred in the neighborhood."

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