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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 18, 1930

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A LIGHTNING SUPERSTITION

No Navajo Indian will ever make a campfire of wood from a tree that has been struck by lightning or that he thinks may have been. If such a fire is made by the irreverent white man, the Indian will retire to a distance, where he can neither feel the heat nor smell the smoke, and will go to sleep in his blanket, fireless and supperless, rather than eat of food prepared on that kind of fire.

The Navajo believes that if he comes within the influence of the flame he will absorb some of the essence of the lightning, which will thereafter be attracted to him and will sooner or later kill him. In the mountains of the Navajo country more than half the great pines are scarred by lightning, but no wood from them is used.

Almost any old Navajo can tell of cases in which this precaution has been neglected with fatal results. No wonder, since thunderstorms are frequent in the region and from time to time an unlucky redskin is struck,

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