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MONUMENTS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

A favorite target of lightning is a metal statue or other object standing at the top of a stone column or building and having no metallic connection with the ground. A typical case of damage due to the lack of such connection occurred some years ago at Santamaria di Capua Vetere, in Italy, where lightning wrecked a monument commemorating a battle fought in the campaigns of 1860. At the top of a marble column 95 feet high stood a colossal bronze statue of Victory weighing 1,500 pounds. The statue was fixed in the summit of the column by an iron rod, which penetrated about half-way down. During a violent thunderstorm lightning threw down the statue and destroyed the upper half of the column.

Similar catastrophes befell a column in Constantinople in the year 548 and another, dedicated to Constantine the Great, in the same city in the year 1101. In Rome, in the fourteenth century, the column of Marcus Aurelius Antonius was badly damaged at the top, and in the same century the statue of Trajan at the summit of the famous Trajan's Column was likewise destroyed by lightning. The flagstaff and the bronze statue of the Archangel Michael on the Castle of St. Angelo, in Rome, were similarly destroyed in 1572. The basilica of St. Peter's in Rome was struck at least 22 times, generally on the cross or the golden ball, between the years 1606 and 1809, but since the installation of lightning-rods in the latter year the structure has been exempt from damage by lightning.

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