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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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AN AFRICAN LIGHTNING SUPERSTITION

Sir J. G. Frazer tells us that among the Kafirs of South Africa it is a rule that when lightning has struck a kraal, killing man or beast, no person in the kraal may leave it or drink milk until a medicine man has come and performed certain purificatory ceremonies over all the inhabitants. If the victim is a beast it is always buried and never eaten, and a prescribed ritual is followed before and after the burial.

"Till the rite has been duly carried out," we are told, "the inhabitants are seemingly supposed to be electrified by the shock and to be capable of discharging the electricity with fatal effect on any persons with whom they may come in contact. Hence the precaution of isolating or, in electrical language, insulating them from all their neighbors till the man of skill has, so to say, tapped the electricity and allowed it to run off safely into the grave of the victim.

"If this interpretation of the rite is correct, we can easily understand why, in their electrified condition, the inhabitants of the kraal are forbidden to drink milk. For on the principles of sympathetic magic, which are as plain to the savage as the multiplication<sup>table</sup>/is to us, the drinking of milk by an electrified person would infallibly communicate an electric shock to the cow from which the milk was extracted, and nothing, humanly speaking, could save the life of the poor creature but the direct interposition of the medicine man."

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