

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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Authority on Meteorology.

THE STRANGEST LIGHTNING

Probably the queerest display of lightning ever reported by a scientific observer was one encountered on October 3, 1927, by Dr. Walter Knoche, a well-known German meteorologist, during a steamboat journey down the Rio Paraguay in South America. A severe drought had prevailed in the surrounding country for months and no rain fell before or during the electrical storm, which, without warning, suddenly began in all parts of the sky at 7 p.m. "It would have been hopeless," says Dr. Knoche, "to attempt even an approximate count of the flashes." Some were ordinary streak lightning, but reddish in color. Almost equally numerous, however, were the flashes of dazzling white "beaded lightning," which looks like a string of glowing pearls in the sky. Such lightning has occasionally been reported in connection with other storms, but never as occurring with such frequency.

Dr. Knoche tells also of various anomalous phenomena seen during this display, including curious rapidly-moving orange-colored discharges, which he says resembled cylindrical masses of glowing gas; flashes that revolved like pinwheels; and, at one period of the storm, hundreds of luminous arcs crowded together near the zenith, so dazzling in their brilliancy that he had to close his eyes.

Strange to say, this spectacular display went on for hours without thunder. A ghastly quiet prevailed; not a breath of air stirred. Thunder began abruptly at 1:30 a. m., and was then almost continuous until 4 a. m. The last lightning was seen astern of the steamer about 8 a. m.

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