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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SHEET LIGHTNING

Most sheet lightning is merely the reflection on clouds of ordinary streak lightning, the latter being behind the clouds or below the horizon, so that it is not directly visible. There is a good deal of evidence, however, that lightning sometimes occurs as a diffuse brush discharge over the surface of a cloud. According to some German writers, brilliant displays of silent sheet lightning are often seen on apparently clear nights, not merely around the horizon but in the zenith, on the llanos of Venezuela. In such cases there is probably a thin veil of cloud over the sky. There have been numerous reports of similar lightning from other parts of the world. The Germans call this supposed phenomenon "Flächenblitz" ("surface lightning").

Two observers in England have reported seeing on July 20 of this year remarkable sheet-like glows in a cloud low on the horizon. "The discharges," they state, "seemed to have their origin in the upper part of the cloud, for each one showed the dark upper edge of the cloud in strong relief. Glows of flame-colored light shone upward and illuminated higher clouds. Sometimes the glow would extend over the whole cloud, sometimes over only a portion of it, and occasionally would start at one end of the cloud and move to the other end before being extinguished. The discharges occurred at intervals of one to one and a half minutes and frequently lasted for a second."

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