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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed August 19, 1931

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EFFECTS OF A LIGHTNING STROKE

The effects of a stroke of lightning are sometimes very conspicuous but at other times quite the reverse; the difference depending mainly on the amount of electrical resistance encountered by the discharge. Some years ago an English meteorologist, W. H. Dines, raised the question: Can lightning strike a wet field and leave no noticeable mark? In reply to this query, R. P. Dansey reported a personal experience. He wrote:

"In the course of a cricket match we were compelled to take shelter in the pavilion during a rather bad thunderstorm. As I was watching the storm, I saw a flash come straight down and strike the grass in the cricket field about 100 yards from the pavilion. I distinctly saw the grass smoke where the lightning had struck. Without diverting my eyes from the spot, and although it was still raining fairly heavily, I ran out to see if anything was to be seen.

"Unless I had marked the exact spot I should never have found it, for to an unobservant eye there was nothing to be seen, though there was a strong sulphurous smell. Looking carefully down, I saw lines in the grass radiating from a center as if a piece of cord had been dragged through the grass. There was no hole, even in the center, but just a small spot that was bare of grass."

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