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February 12, 1932

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed February 5, 1932

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BEADED LIGHTNING

Lightning that presents the appearance of a string of glowing pearls in the sky is usually called, in English, "beaded lightning." It was first described in scientific literature by the French physicist Gaston Flanté, who observed it in 1876, and several more recent examples have been seen and described by scientific men of recognized authority. One of these observers was the well-known civil engineer, C.E. Grunsky, who, with two other engineers, saw specimens of such lightning at Calexico, in southern California, during the evening of May 27, 1907. He says:

"There were four or five electrical discharges from clouds to earth, some striking within 1,000 to 2,000 feet, which left their courses distinctly marked by beautiful strings of fire beads. There seemed to be a bead of fire at every angle in the course of the spark, and these beads remained visible long enough to be clearly seen; perhaps a quarter of a second or longer I should add that there were many discharges from clouds to earth that were not of the beaded variety."

Dr. Irving Langmuir, the eminent electrical engineer, wrote in 1907:

"I remember three storms I have witnessed at different times in which flashes of lightning left their paths distinctly marked by strings of fire beads. Two of these storms were in the Alps; the third was at Jackson, N.H., in the White Mountains. Each of these three storms was exceptionally violent; among the most violent I have ever witnessed. The phenomenon was observed only with flashes that were comparatively close - within perhaps 2,000 feet. In each storm several flashes left beaded trails, but not every flash that struck near exhibited that peculiar appearance. I should estimate the time during which the beads remained visible as at least one second; a time amply sufficient to observe distinctly. It appeared to me that the whole course of the flash remained luminous, with a dull red glow, but that at intervals along the path bright points like sparks appeared to remain suspended in the air. The sparks appeared to be moving horizontally, as though blown by the wind."

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