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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHEN LIGHTNING RODS FAIL

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

"Induced" sparks sometimes occur between ungrounded metal objects inside buildings at the time of a lightning discharge. Such a spark may ignite escaping gas and thus start a fire even when the building is fully equipped with lightning rods. A remarkable case of this kind once occurred in Brussels. The City Hall was provided with 60 "aigrettes" -- vertical lightning rods with clusters of points at their tips. The total number of these points was more than 500, and the three ground electrodes had a total contact area of more than two and a half million square feet.

Sir Oliver Lodge wrote in 1889: "Of all the buildings in the world not wholly made of metal, the Hotel de Ville at Brussels was and is the most perfectly and elaborately protected. No electrician exists who would not a year ago have asserted, had he gone over it, that it was absurdly and exaggeratedly safe from damage by lightning. Last July it was struck and set on fire."

Gas from a leaky main was ignited by an induced spark.

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