

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
May 26, 1934

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 19, 1934

LIGHTNING-PRINTS

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Lightning frequently imprints upon the bodies of persons who are struck by it, with or without fatal results, ramifying pink marks, which generally fade out of sight in a few days if the victim recovers. These marks, known as "lightning-prints" or "keraunographs," bear some resemblance to trees or the venation of leaves; hence the common belief that they are photographic images of vegetation growing near the scene of the lightning stroke.

Camille Flammarion, in the longer of his two anecdotal books on lightning, a bungling English translation of which appeared in 1906 under the title "Thunder and Lightning," devotes a whole chapter to these marks, in which he incorporates and accepts at face value all the fantastic stories that have been told about them. The hypothetical "ceraunic rays" by which Flammarion accounts for the alleged photographic effects of lightning are unnecessary to explain the marks in question, which are merely burns due to the passage of a branching electrical discharge. Similar marks are found on the bodies of persons injured by artificial electric currents. The correct explanation of lightning-prints appears to have been first given by the German pathologist Eduard Rindfleisch in 1862.

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