

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
September 15, 1934

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed Sept. 8, 1934

AN UNUSUAL FULGURITE

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology.

The following anecdote is found in the writing of the famous Scottish physicist, Sir David Brewster:

"In the summer of 1827 a hay-stack in the parish of Dun, in Forfar, was struck by lightning. The stack was on fire, but before much of the hay was consumed the fire was extinguished by the farm servants. Upon examining the hay-stack, a circular passage was observed in the middle of it, as if it had been cut out with a sharp instrument. This circular passage extended to the bottom of the stack, and terminated in a hole in the ground. Captain Thomson, of Montrose, who had a farm in the neighbourhood, examined the stack, and found in the hole in the hay-stack a substance which he described as resembling lava. A portion of this substance was sent by Captain Thomson to my brother, Dr. Brewster of Craig, who forwarded it to me with the preceding statement. The substance found was a mass of silex obviously formed by the fusion of the silex in the hay. It had a highly greenish tinge, and contained burnt portions of the hay. I presented the specimen to the museum of St. Andrews."

One of the well-known effects of a lightning stroke is the formation in sandy soil of a glassy tube known as a "fulgurite." The tube results from the fusing of the heated sand along the path of the discharge. Sand consists of silica, which is also abundant in the stems of grasses, and the object that was found in the hay-stack, as above described, should doubtless be regarded as a species of fulgurite.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.