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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 15, 1935

THE "DESERT SOUND"

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Authority on Meteorology

One afternoon in the year 1829 the members of an exploring party headed by Captain Charles Sturt had halted their march in the interior of Australia hundreds of miles from any known human habitation. The day was fine. Not a cloud was in the sky, not a breath of air was stirring. Suddenly the explorers heard what seemed to be a cannon shot at a distance of five or six miles.

"It was not," writes Sturt, "the hollow sound of an earthly explosion or the sharp cracking noise of falling timber, but in every way resembled a discharge of a heavy piece of ordnance. I sent one of the men immediately up a tree, but he could observe nothing unusual. The country around appeared to be thickly wooded. Whatever occasioned the report, it made a strong impression on all of us, and to this day the singularity of such a sound in such a situation is a matter of mystery to me."

Since then the same mysterious noise of gunfire has been heard from time to time in various parts of Australia, where it is called the "desert sound." And there are thousands of reports of equally mysterious booming and rumbling sounds heard in different parts of the world. Science calls them all "brontides." No satisfactory explanation for them has yet been offered.

Poets of the Keatsian school need not worry. Philosophy seeks in vain to "empty the haunted air."

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