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A. Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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### BRONTIDES AGAIN

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In July, 1808, the explorers Captains Lewis and Clark were at Great Falls, Montana. They wrote in their journal: "Since our arrival at the Falls we have repeatedly heard a strange noise coming from the mountains in a direction a little to the north of west. It is heard at different periods of the day and night, sometimes when the air is perfectly still and without a cloud, and consists of one stroke only, or five or six discharges in quick succession. It is loud, and resembles precisely the sound of a six-pound piece of ordnance at the distance of three miles." In 1810 similar sounds were heard in the Black Hills of Dakota by a party fitted out by John Jacob Astor, which made an overland trip from the Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia.

There are, as I stated the other day, a number of other early reports of mysterious explosive sounds heard in various parts of the world, and there is a reference to this acoustic mystery in the works of Francis Bacon; but the sounds received no attention from science until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Today thousands of cases have been reported. The phenomenon is fairly common in parts of Italy, on the coast of Belgium, in the Ganges delta and in the interior of Australia. But it remains a mystery. Science has advanced little farther toward its explanation than to give it a name adapted to international use, as a substitute for dozens of names applied to it in different localities. In scientific literature the sounds are now called "brontides"--- meaning literally "like thunder."

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