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ENGINEERING AND SCIENTIFIC NOTES

The theory of the noise of thunder for a long time in various parts of the world by scientists is that the concussion and the violent sound waves were caused by the sudden partial bursting of the air into the vacuum produced by the passage of the electric spark. If such is the only cause, the intensity of the noise, calculated from energy principles, seems excessive. To overcome this difficulty, a new theory has been proposed. It is that the thunder is the result of the intense heating of the gases of the atmosphere, especially of the water vapor, so that in reality a violent steam explosion is produced along the path of electric discharge giving rise to waves of great velocity. Experimental evidence which tends to support this theory has been ingeniously carried on by Trochdale. An electric spark of a certain length, say three inches, was passed between the familiar discharge balls of an induction coil and the intensity of the sound measured with suitable instruments. The spark balls were then covered with water-soaked cotton and the spark again passed which was accompanied with a more intense noise than formerly, showing that thunder is probably produced by an explosion as well as a rushing back of the atmosphere. The continued "rolling" of thunder is, of course, caused by the echo from surrounding hills, etc. The writer was surprised to find that far out to sea, where such reflecting walls are at a large degree absent, the thunder usually consists of but a single "clap" to accompany each flash of lightning.

The Geological Survey is making a study of the volume and character of the flow of streams at the following gaging stations: Connecticut River at Sunderland; Deerfield River at Housatonic River near Charlemont, Deerfield River near Shelburne Falls, Housatonic River at Great Barrington, Quaboag River at West Brookfield, Swift River at West Ware, Ware River at Ware, West Branch of Farmington River at New Boston, Ware River at Gibbs Crossing, Westfield River (Middle Branch) at Goshen Heights, and Westfield River at Knightsville. This work is being done in cooperation with the State. At these gaging stations the height or stage of the rivers is determined each day by local observers, and measurements of the discharge of the streams are made by engineers of the Survey. From these data, the quantity of water flowing past the stations is determined. These hydrometric data are of use principally in the design, construction, and maintenance of power plants and in studies of municipal water supplies, though all data relating to stream flow are valuable for general statistical and comparative purposes.

The investigations of surface water by the Geological Survey in Massachusetts are being made under the direction of C. C. Covert, district engineer, by C. H. Pierce, assistant engineer. The district office is in the Federal Building, Albany, N. Y.

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