
Thunder and lighting

Flammarion Camille

Title: Thunder and lighting

Author: Flammarion Camille

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THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

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BY
CAMILLE FLAMMARION

TRANSLATED BY WALTER MOSTYN



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THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

CHAPTER I

THE VICTIMS OF LIGHTNING

It would be an interesting thing to make a careful study once a year, towards the end of the summer, of the habits and customs of thunder and lightning. Perhaps in this way we should succeed one day in determining the still mysterious nature of these elusive forces. I, for my part, have been engaged upon the task for many years past. It has produced a big accumulation of records, and in this volume I can find room but for a *résumé* of them, as varied as possible. In my first chapter I shall present a few characteristic examples, just to give my readers some hint of this variety.

Not to go too far back, let us begin with a harmless—I might almost say playful—fireball performance, of which M. Schnauffer, Professor at Marseilles, has given me the particulars.

In October, 1898, the fireball in question made

its appearance in a room and advanced towards a young girl who was seated at the table, her feet hanging down without touching the floor. The luminous globe moved along the floor in the girl's direction, began to rise quite near her and then round and round her, spiral fashion, darted off towards a hole in the chimney—a hole made for the stove-pipe, and closed up with glued paper—made its way up the chimney, and, on emerging into the open air, gave out upon the roof an appalling crash which shook the entire house. It was a case of coming in like a lamb and going out like a lion !

A similar occurrence is recorded as having been observed in Paris, on July 5, 1852, in a tailor's room, including the same curious detail of the departure through the hole in the chimney, closed up with paper.

It was in the Rue Saint Jacques, near the Val de Grâce. The fireball burst into the room from the chimney, knocking over the paper guard in front of the fireplace. In appearance it suggested a young cat, gathered up into a ball, as it were, and moving along without using its paws. It approached the tailor's legs as though to play with them. The tailor moved them away to avoid the contact, of which he naturally was in terror. After some seconds, the globe of fire rose vertically to the height of the man's face as he sat, and he, to save himself, leaned quickly back and