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LIGHTNING AND AIRPLANES

The solution to the problem as to the possible danger to an airplane in a thunder storm, is on schedule at the laboratory of the Ohio Insulator Company.

The laboratory is going to have new equipment installed which will be capable of producing a spark of 3,000,000 volts pressure. There is also an open-air laboratory which will contain three of the largest transformers ever built. There will also be a number of oscillators to produce a continuous spark discharge. At the end of this laboratory there will be rigging to suspend planes to the size of the Ford tri-motor. Here planes will be experimented upon with lightning.

One problem has already been solved. A plane can be struck, can deflect a lightning discharge and become part of its path from cloud to cloud or from cloud to ground. Problems to be solved are:

When a plane is struck what effect will the lightning have on the pilot and passengers?

If lightning passes near, what is the effect on the pilot? That is, will the pilot be unconscious temporarily?

What effect has lightning on the ignition system?

Will exhaust gases, due to their ionizing effect, create a path for an attack of lightning?

Will several hundred thousand amperes passing imperfectly bonded joints cause the metal to fuse instantaneously?—*Scientific American*.