

# NATURE'S PRANK UPSETS THE AIR

**D**ESPITE the tremendous power pumped into the air by globe-girdling broadcasters, Nature can still gain the upper hand and play pranks that stop the "show." Not to be secretive about it, the aurora borealis dances in the heavens and jabs fingers of lights through the wave lengths. Great black freckles on the face of the sun also are tell-tale signs that Nature is exerting the upper hand on man's use of the sky.

Radio has just passed through and is recovering from one of the worst solar "cyclones" or magnetic bombardments in its history. Quickly the operators shift from wave to wave to dodge such attacks, and sometimes the juggling is successful, but not during the recent storm. Static crashed. A mysterious curtain dropped between the Old and the New Worlds. Radio, telegraph, telephone and cables were upset and paralyzed. For hours Europe was blotted out.

But it is remembered that Steinmetz declared "there are no ether waves; they are electromagnetic." And so when Nature stirs up a magnetic bombardment and sprays an electrical barrage around the earth, radio music, speech, dots and dashes are blasted, cut to pieces and silenced.

All week the broadcasters have been uneasy as they described it, with fingers crossed, in fear that any minute the storm might "blow" back, and on several occasions it did, although for only an hour or two.

The transcontinental lines carrying network broadcasts were operated during the storm through the simple expedient of switching from the automatic to the hand-operated relay stations that "pump" the programs along the wires. The A. T. & T. was able to complete only 25 per cent of its normal service on Sunday, when the disturbances were at the height.