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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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BALL LIGHTNING ILLUSIONS

Though the existence of ball lightning is generally admitted by scientific authorities, many alleged cases of it may be illusory. Commenting on a case recently reported from the Canadian Artillery Camp at Petawawa, when an officer and two men were killed by lightning, supposedly of the globular variety, Dr. W. J. Humphreys, of the U. S. Weather Bureau, remarks:

"A common form of apparent ball lightning is that in which a brilliant 'ball' is said to have hit a certain spot and then bounded away at greater or less speed over the ground, finally going off with a 'bang.' The explanation is as follows. Where the lightning hits there often is a brilliant flash -- much more brilliant than the streak itself. This is the 'ball.' It dazzles the eye and produces an image that persists for some seconds, nearly always to one side of the center of vision, because one would seldom be looking at the exact spot struck at the moment this happened. Hence in turning the eye to look directly at the bright glare, the latter itself also turns, being a persistent image on the retina and no longer an objective phenomenon. But the movement of the eye is irregular, and so the 'ball' goes bounding along. In a little while the thunder reaches and more or less startles the observer. That is when the supposed ball 'explodes' with a crash."

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