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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A CASE OF BALL LIGHTNING

The inn standing at the summit of the Faulhorn (altitude 8,800 feet), in the Swiss Alps, though surrounded by a series of lightning-rods, has been the scene of two remarkable cases of ball lightning, both of which occurred indoors; one in 1914 and the other in 1921. Neither did any damage. The second case was witnessed by Suzanne Iacci, who has charge of the inn. She says:

"About 5 p.m. of a hot fine July afternoon I was in the dining-room of the hotel with my sister Margaret and six other guests. A dark cloud was noticed approaching from the east, but neither rain, hail nor snow fell before the occurrence of the fire-balls, and only distant lightning had been observed. Suddenly from the air inlet of the large stove, in which a small wood fire was burning, came, practically simultaneously, a large number of very bright round balls of various colors, the largest perhaps nearly as large as my head. Almost at the same moment a dreadful deafening explosion occurred, and the balls had all vanished. The room was full of a grey smoke -- perhaps disturbed dust -- and a strong peculiar odor was observed. I opened the doors to clear the air, and then examined the room. I could find no signs of scorching on the curtains, flowers or the unenclosed stuffed birds and animals in the room. The fire had not been disturbed and none of the fuel was ejected. The guests who were nearest the stove momentarily experienced a slight electric shock, but no one was injured."

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