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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TRAVELS OF BALL LIGHTNING

An exceptional case of ball lightning, in which the luminous object was kept under observation while it made a long journey over the country, was reported some years ago from Ireland. A Mr. Fitzgerald was traveling in the Glendowan Mountains when he noticed a globe of fire floating slowly down from a ridge into a valley until it reached a stream about 300 yards from the spot where the observer stood. It then struck the land and reappeared in about a minute. Again it disappeared and reappeared several times, until it flew across the stream and finally lodged in the opposite bank, leaving a hole where it had buried itself.

On examination of its track, an aperture 20 feet square was found in the peat where it had first touched the land, and the peat was turned up as if it had been cut with a huge knife. It next made a trench more than 100 yards long and 4 feet deep. It then tore away the bank of the stream to a depth of 5 feet for a distance of 27 yards and hurled the immense mass of earth into the water, after which it flew across into the opposite bank of peaty soil. About 20 minutes elapsed from the time it was first seen until it finally disappeared, covering a distance of more than a mile. It was first a bright red ball of fire about two feet in diameter, but it became rapidly smaller, especially after each dip in the soil, so that it looked not more than three inches in diameter when last seen.

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