

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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Authority on Meteorology.

BALL LIGHTNING?

There is almost no end to the variety of strange luminous "meteors" observed from time to time in the atmosphere -- or said to have been observed -- and some of the reported phenomena can hardly be identified with any of those recognized by science. Attempts to account for them often stretch unduly the application of such terms as "ball lightning," "St. Elmo's fire" and "will-o'-the-wisp."

Dr. Ellsworth Huntington stands sponsor for the remarkable tale of the mountains in the Taurus range that are alleged to throw balls of fire at one another across the valley of the Euphrates. His narrative, with a map of the region in question, was published in July, 1900, in the Monthly Weather Review. He did not witness the phenomenon himself but gathered his description from a dozen different residents of the locality. He says:

"The facts upon which all agree are as follows: A ball of fire is sometimes seen to start from one mountain and go like a flash to another. At the same time there is a sound like thunder. This occurs by day or by night, although by night no light is seen. It always occurs when the sky is clear. It sometimes happens two or three times in a year, and then again is not seen for several years. It is almost or entirely confined to the fall; at the end of the long dry season of three months. In every case the flash crosses the Euphrates River, which here flows through a deep, precipitous valley, at an elevation of 2,000 feet above sea level, or at from 3,500 to 5,500 feet below the tops of the mountains. Between any two mountains it goes in differently in either direction."

Dr. Huntington visited the mountains and convinced himself that the reported phenomena could not be volcanic.

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