

Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed August 17, 1932

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SLOW-MOVING BALL-LIGHTNING

Reports of ball lightning in which the luminous ball is said to have travelled swiftly through the air and to have remained visible only for an instant are more easily explained as cases of optical illusion than those in which the ball is alleged to have moved slowly and to have been seen for a considerable time. Here is an observation of the latter kind reported to Dr. W.J. Humphreys, of the U. S. Weather Bureau, by a medical man, Dr. W. E. B. Hall. In the summer of 1917 Dr. Hall was living at Lindsay, Ontario, where, with his mother and sister, he occupied a second-story apartment across the street from a large automobile body factory. A moderate electrical storm was nearly over.

"My mother and sister," he writes, "who were watching the storm from the window, saw a large round ball of marked brilliance, whitish-blue in color and over two feet in diameter, enter the second floor of the factory through an open window. Workmen in the factory said that it pursued a leisurely course through the factory, apparently without sound, did not vary from a straight course, badly singed one ambulance body that it touched but did not set it on fire. Nobody was hurt. After traveling about 50 yards it suddenly shifted and sailed slowly out of another open window, on straight across the street, and into the window of our apartment through which my mother and sister had been watching.

"Both of them fled, my mother hiding under a table and my sister retreating through an adjoining door. Without a sound this brilliant ball, which apparently had lost none of its bulk, glided after my sister, who fled from room to room. Suddenly she fell in a faint and the ball glided on over her head without harming her. At least, that is what we supposed to have happened, for she was quite unconscious when we found her nor was there any damage found. The ball itself disappeared entirely after traveling at least 25 yards in our home. Both in the factory and in our apartment it maintained a height of about 4 to 5 feet above the floor. The whole thing was a terrible shock to my sister, whose dreams for many a week were haunted with visions of this ball of light that had seemed to chase her."

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