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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed July 10, 1933

TWO-STAGE BALL LIGHTNING

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

That strange and still mysterious manifestation of thunderstorms, ball lightning, exhibits a good deal of diversity, judging from the reports of observers. The so-called balls vary in color, shape and behavior. A most unusual case was reported from Salina, Kansas, October 8, 1919, when a ball of exceptionally large size is said to have broken up into a number of smaller balls. The display was seen about 6:30 in the evening. Eye-witnesses described "a ball of fire as large as a washtub floating low in the air" at the intersection of two of the principal streets. It struck the northwest corner of the Campbell Building, tore out some bricks, demolished a second-story window, and then exploded with a bang, like the noise of a large pistol. The air was then seen to be filled with fiery balls as large as baseballs, which floated away in various directions.

"Some of these balls," says the report, published in the Monthly Weather Review, "followed trolley and electric light wires in a snaky sort of manner, and some simply floated off through the air independently of any objects near by. An electric switch box across the street was ripped open and a transformer destroyed, leaving the east side of the town in darkness."

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