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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A CASE OF BALL LIGHTNING

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Dr. Halliday Sutherland's recently published autobiography, "A Time to Keep," contains abundant matter of interest to everybody and one passage of special interest to the weatherman. It is a description of ball lightning. The author witnessed this phenomenon during his boyhood in Glasgow. He writes:

"There was thunder in the air, but rain had not yet fallen. I was walking on the pavement and saw in the center of the road alongside me a globe of dazzling light about four feet in diameter. It was moving along the road faster than I and was soon twenty yards ahead of me. Then came a loud report and it shot straight up to the sky. On returning home I reported what I had seen to somewhat incredulous parents. Years later I read of ball lightning, the mystery of which, so far as I know, has not been explained. The thing left an indelible impression on my memory. For several years I would sometimes dream of a ball of yellow light coming toward me."

Observers of ball lightning rarely estimate the ball to be as big as it is said to have been in this case. The doctor's description was written, however, after the lapse of many years, and the ball may have "grown" in the meantime.

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