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Mystery light could be a flare

SIR, — The photographs that appear on the front page of "The Age", (21/9) are uncommonly similar to photographs of parachute rocket flares.

Such flares are usually used for marine distress purposes although other versions exist. In particular I would like to draw your attention to parachute illuminating rockets which burn at 100,000 candlepower and would be "bright enough to light up the hills and count the trees".

Photographs I have taken of parachute flare rockets look exactly the same as your first and fourth photographs.

The pattern in your second and third photographs would be similar to the photographs of a parachute flare swinging on its parachute and being blown around in the wind during its lateral and downward descent.

These rockets take the flare up to 1200 feet, make no sound or vibration and throw a brilliant light in all directions. All of these points correspond to the description in your article.

Mr. Jamieson reports that the light was moving as fast as an aircraft, whereas the parachute flare would move no faster than the wind speed. Furthermore the object was visible for 15 to 20 minutes but he does not indicate if this was a continuous sighting. The parachute flare would normally burn no longer than one minute. A series of flares could have been released over a 20-minute period.

It is possible that, because of the small size of the flare body, three inches long by 1½ inches diameter, the observer was deluded into thinking that the light was many miles away and travelling at great speed?

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