

No. 99

A Science Service Feature

Sept. 4

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
Secretary, American Meteorological Society,
tells of:

THE BROCKEN SPECTRE

A strange phenomenon sometimes seen by people on mountains, and by balloonists and aviators, is the Brocken Spectre. It consists of rainbow-hued ring or rings centered about the shadow of the head of the observer as cast, together with that of his mountain, balloon or airplane, upon a cloud mass. The name comes from the Brocken, a peak of the Hartz Mountains in Germany, where it is a common phenomenon.

The colored rings, or glory, as they are sometimes called, are similar to those of the corona, the bright bands of which are occasionally seen closely encircling the sun or moon. The colored rings encircle the shadow head, the smallest bluish, then yellow, orange and red. Sometimes there is a double glory, that of larger diameter containing the full range of colors of the rainbow, from violet to red.

The cause of the Brocken Spectre is what the physicist calls the diffraction of light reflected from the interior of the cloud. It is totally unrelated to either the rainbow or the halo.

(TOMORROW: Dust Devils)

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