

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed August 29, 1928.

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MIRAGE AT MONTICELLO

Thomas Jefferson, who was a keen student of weather and atmospheric phenomena, devotes a page in his "Notes on the State of Virginia" to the subject of mirage. He tells of a case of "looming" seen from Yorktown, when "a canoe with three men at a great distance was taken for a ship with its three masts." He was much interested in the effects of atmospheric refraction on distant mountains, as seen from Monticello. Of this he says:

"There is a solitary mountain about 40 miles off in the south, whose natural shape is a regular cone, but . . . it sometimes subsides almost totally in the horizon; sometimes it rises more acute and more elevated; sometimes it is hemispherical; and sometimes its sides are perpendicular, its top flat and as broad as its base. In short it assumes at times the most whimsical shapes, and all these perhaps successively in the same morning."

"I remark no particular state, either in the weight, moisture or heat of the atmosphere, necessary to produce this. The only constant circumstances are its appearance in the morning only, and on objects at least 40 or 50 miles distant."

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