

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
May 9, 1929

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 2, 1929

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

THE NAMES OF HALOS

Under the generic term "halos" science groups a large number of optical phenomena of the atmosphere having the common characteristic that they are all due to the effects produced on light by minute ice crystals; either in the clouds, or, especially in the polar regions, in the lower atmosphere. Some are caused by refraction and show prismatic colors. Others result from reflection and are white. Several are due to refraction and reflection combined. The commonest halo is a ring of 22 degrees radius surrounding the sun or moon. Other rings of definite angular sizes, also surround the source of light. Many are rings, arcs or patches of light in other locations. Some ^{halos} are extremely rare, and some that are supposed to be possible have never been seen.

Now it is a remarkable fact that, although every halo phenomenon known to science has been given a name, most of the names are unfamiliar, not only to the man in the street but to ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent. of the scientific world. Thus it happens that when the observation of an interesting halo is reported, even in scientific literature, the observer rarely mentions the thing he has seen by name, but describes it in circumlocutory and often inexact language. A scientific traveler who wishes to tell of meeting with a camel does not say that he encountered "a large brown quadruped with a hump on its back", but if he has seen in the sky the beautiful circumzenithal arc, or the white parhelic circle, or the halo of Hevelius, or the oblique arcs of the anthelion, etc., he hardly ever says so. He says: "I saw an arc (or a circle) of such and such a size, in such and such a position, showing (or not showing) prismatic colors", etc.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and B Sts.
Washington, D.C.