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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A LAND OF PHANTOMS

With the possible exception of the polar regions there is probably no other such happy-hunting-ground for the student of atmospheric optics as the great salt-impregnated plain, intermittently under water, on the northwest coast of India known as the Rann (or Runn) of Cutch. When the plain is flooded a dazzling haze hangs over it, so that travelers wading through the shallow water are unable to determine the direction of the sun, and, in the absence of landmarks, often lose their way.

Sir Bartle Frere, who has described this haze, tells also of the remarkable mirages that usually prevail here by day, simulating minarets, clusters of houses and the like, suspended in the air. According to legend, a pious king once reigned here, when the country was fertile. "He had succeeded so completely in restoring a golden reign of virtue that his capital, purified from all that was unclean or offensive, was in gradual process of elevation to Heaven, when a donkey, regarded by the Hindus as a most unclean animal, which had been forgotten in an outhouse, betrayed his presence by braying. The elevation of the city then stopped, and it has ever since wandered uneasily between earth and Heaven over the district."

After rain, or during the cold weather season, a dense white fog often covers the ground in the early morning, on which a spectator standing on top of a sandhill sees his shadow -- the spectre of the Brocken -- with a glory about the head. Just after and before rain the atmosphere is remarkably clear. Lastly fine effects of rose-colored lights, similar to the Alpenglow, are also seen here.

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