

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
May 5, 1931

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed April 28, 1931

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A MONEY-MAKING MIRAGE

The fact that "hacks" are an extinct species in the Sunflower State is not the only reason why the tenderfoot who migrates thither is not likely to be victimized as Ham Bell, one of Dodge City's oldest inhabitants, once was.

"I came to Kansas," he recently told Mr. Justice, of the U.S. Weather Bureau, "in 1872, landing one night in Ellsworth. The next morning I engaged a hack-driver to take me to Great Bend, a distance of forty-five miles. He charged me forty-five dollars - a dollar a mile - and demanded payment in advance. The excuse given for this exorbitant price was the danger that would attend the crossing of a lake, which could be seen in the distance, and which he said his team would have to wade. The lake was only a mirage, but the rascally driver had my money before I found it out.

"The mirage," Mr. Bell added, "is not seen today as it was then, and people do not talk of it as they did in those days."

This is doubtless true in the regions where the once vast tracts of level prairie land have been converted into farms. The type of mirage that was formerly common there is due to the formation of a shallow layer of very hot stagnant air over the ground. Where crops grow, the ground and the air in contact with it do not grow so hot as they formerly did, and even when a layer of hot air is present the crops generally rise above it and thus prevent the quasi-reflection of the sky from its surface that would produce a delusive appearance of water.

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