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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ENGLISH CHANNEL MIRAGES

The English Channel is a favorite haunt of mirages. The description of a display observed by Samuel Vince at Ramsgate in 1798 has become classic. In April, 1869, John Parnell, at Folkestone, saw the French cliffs "apparently so lofty and with every indentation so clearly visible that one might easily have imagined they were but ten miles distant." The coast could be seen all the way from Calais to a point many miles beyond Boulogne. At the same time, we are told, "the lighthouse at Cape Gris Nez gave five images in a vertical line; the lowest erect but somewhat magnified; above that and separate from it a pair of images of the center and highest portion of the building only, one erect and the other inverted; and over these another pair, the inverted image being like the former one but the erect image showing the whole building. Over Boulogne, in the air, were two images of the double funnel and mast of a tugboat, the lower image being erect and the upper inverted."

Thomas Waring, while yachting among the Channel Islands on May 21, 1870, saw these islands raised to twice their natural height, with inverted images of various features in the sky. Ships were seen sailing keel upward through the air, every sail and spar distinct, and in some cases the images were reduplicated. At a later stage the cliffs of Alderney were, says Mr. Waring's description, "magnified to an apparent height of many hundred feet, and no scene painter devising a grand transformation scene ever dreamed of more fantastic groups of basaltic columns, grottoes and rock arches, with the tide flowing beneath, than was exhibited by the island and the isolated stacks around it."

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