

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DISTANT VISIBILITY

No definite limit can be set to the distance at which terrestrial objects, if of sufficiently large size and not hidden by the curvature of the earth, can be seen in clear weather. In this connection the Daily Mail (London) publishes the following letter from G.D. Simpson, master mariner:

"At daybreak, 5:30 a.m., on November 23, in latitude 29 degrees 54 minutes north, longitude 18 degrees 49 minutes west, Teneriffe Peak, Canary Islands, was visible to the naked eye at a distance of 150 miles. This, I believe, is the farthest distance on record at which the peak has been sighted. The altitude of its summit above the horizon was in accordance with that of an object 12,000 feet high (approximately the height of Teneriffe Peak) viewed from a distance of 150 miles by an observer 50 feet above sea level. This proves that the unusual visibility of the peak was not due to a mirage."

Clouds are sometimes seen at even greater distances. Thus a Scottish meteorologist, A.H.R. Goldie, reports that on the afternoon of July 16, 1930, while on a steamer between Lerwick and Aberdeen, he saw very clearly the tops of cumulus clouds that almost certainly were lying over the Norwegian coast, some 200 miles distant. The cloud tops were probably about 20,000 feet above sea level.

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