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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

PICTURES OF THE "TABLECLOTH"

A recent number of the Illustrated London News contains a double-page colored picture of Table Mountain, South Africa, capped by the famous cloud known as the Tablecloth. This cloud figures in scientific literature as a classic example of the condensation of moisture from winds that cool by expansion when forced to rise in passing over an obstruction, while according to local legendry it consists of smoke resulting from a smoking match between the Dutch pirate Van Hunks and the Devil.

Considering the frequency with which the cloud appears over the mountain and its world-wide celebrity, surprisingly few pictures of it have ever been published, and still fewer that do justice to its striking appearance. The earliest picture with which I am familiar is a very inaccurate one - evidently drawn by an artist who had never seen either the cloud or the mountain - found in a curious German book on meteorology by E. Francisci, published in 1600. This picture and two others were reproduced in the Monthly Weather Review for June, 1921. A good photograph of which the Weather Bureau has a negative has been published in several American books and magazines, and there is another in the National Geographic Magazine for April, 1931.

In my own recent book "The Realm of the Air" I have published a photograph by Blyth Clayton, of Cape Town, that brings out in a spectacular way the resemblance of the cloud at its border to an immense waterfall pouring down the vertical side of the mountain.

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