A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed June 17, 1932

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Authority on Meteorology.

SALT HAZE

Dr. J.S. Owens, a well-known English authority on the subject of atmospheric dust, has called attention in some of his writings to the frequent occurrence over the ocean and also over land not far from the seashore of a haze consisting of fine particles of salt, derived from sea spray. As salt is highly hygroscopic, these particles may become the nuclei of water drops even when the water vapor of the atmosphere is far below the stage of saturation, and their presence in the air is probably a common cause of fog. During a recent visit to Portugal, Dr. Owens had an opportunity of witnessing the formation of a salt haze. At a small town on the coast south of Oporto he observed that there was a strong wind blowing from the sea and that much spray was being blown from the waves.

"On returning to Lisbon by train the same afternoon," he says, "the railway running parallel to the coast, it was observed that a range of hills along the coast was nearly obscured by a white haze. The day was one of brilliant sunshine and very hot. There were no clouds, and the distance from the sea to the railway was about six to seven miles. The wind at the time was blowing at an angle to the shore, but off the sea, and it was noticeable that the hills in the distance on the opposite side of the railway were also covered with a white haze, but not nearly so dense. It seemed certain that this haze was formed by the wind drifting the sea spray inland, and the air was so dry that doubtless the water had evaporated, leaving very small particles of sea salt, which were easily carried by the wind to form the haze."

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