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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE SPECTRE OF THE BROCKEN

The spectre of the Brocken is a shadow cast upon fog or clouds. The ideal conditions for seeing it from a mountaintop are to stand with your back to a low sun, with a light mist in the air around you and a heavier bank of fog or cloud not far away in the direction toward which you are looking. You behold your own shadow, which mimics your every motion, and which you may suppose to be of colossal size on account of greatly overestimating its distance from you. In order to show a definite human outline the spectre must be within 15 or 20 yards of the observer, and generally it is much nearer; but most descriptions place it hundreds of yards or even several miles away, and hence assume it to be enormous.

So don't trust the Encyclopaedia Britannica when it tells you that the Brocken spectre is "gigantic." And don't take too literally any of the drawings of this phantom that have been published in books. A man's shadow cast on a fog is not like a shadow on a solid wall. Part of it falls on drops at one distance from him and part on drops at other distances. To see it you must stand in nearly the same direction from the shadow as the man himself. The drawings nearly always imply that the artist was in a quite different position, from which the shadow would have been invisible. For the reason just stated, two men do not see each other's shadows unless they are standing close together, and not then if the shadows are near at hand.

The unearthly aspect of the Brocken spectre is enhanced in many cases by a series of colored rings surrounding the shadow's head and occasionally a large fog-bow, white or faintly colored, has been seen around the whole shadow.

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