

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
May 31, 1934

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 24, 1934

RAINBOW IMPOSSIBILITIES

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

A rainbow is formed by the reflection of light from a multitude of raindrops, acting as mirrors. Passing through a rainbow is therefore a feat exactly on a par with Alice's visit to the country back of the looking-glass; yet the performance of this impossible feat is frequently reported. Not long ago Mr. Henry Wickham Steed, the well-known British journalist, wrote to The Times that while motoring he came up to the spot where one end of a rainbow rested on the road and "ran slowly through it in a strange greenish light with a ruddy tinge."

Henry D. Thoreau claims, in "Walden," that he was once enveloped in the base of a rainbow. "It chanced," he says, "that I stood in the very abutment of a rainbow's arch, which filled the lower stratum of the atmosphere, tinging the grass and leaves around and dazzling me as if I looked through colored crystal. It was a lake of rainbow light, in which, for a short time, I lived like a dolphin."

Prof. C.L. Lewis, in his biography of Matthew Fontaine Maury, tells of the departure of the U.S.S. "Brandywine" from American shores in 1825, carrying Lafayette back to France. "She passed," he says, "down the Chesapeake through a brilliant rainbow which was apparently supported on the Virginia and Maryland shores, as if Nature had reserved to herself the honor of erecting the last of the numerous triumphal arches that had been dedicated to the great Frenchman during his extraordinary visit."

Fairy tales!

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.