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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed January 5, 1935

LOOMING

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When abnormal atmospheric refraction increases the apparent elevation of distant objects, the process is described as "looming." Because we associate a certain apparent altitude with a certain distance, this effect generally makes the objects seem nearer than they really are. Looming is most frequently seen over water, and there are certain places where its occurrence occasionally arouses enough excitement to become the subject of press dispatches. The looming of the eastern shore of Lake Michigan as seen from Chicago has thus figured from time to time in the daily chronicle.

Looming has been responsible for a good deal of faulty cartography. The historic mistakes of Commander Wilkes in charting the location of the Antarctic coast have been ascribed by some geographers to the effects of abnormal refraction in causing him to misjudge its distance from his ships; though other authorities still insist that he mistook icefields for land. Feary, in 1906, mistook the loom of the sea ice for a distant mountainous land northwest of Grant Land and named his supposed discovery "Crocker Land." On the other hand, Scott, Borchgrevink and other polar explorers have at times found looming a useful phenomenon, which enabled them to locate both land and icefields beyond the normal range of vision.

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