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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed January 9, 1935

FATA MORGANA

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Authority on Meteorology

Aspects of the outdoor landscape seen through the inhomogeneous and more or less "bubbly" glass of an ordinary windowpane will often show curious distortions such as are produced by the same process of irregular refraction through air in certain states of the atmosphere. A distant ship, mountain or what not may thus assume a weird form, which changes with a shifting of the atmospheric strata through which it is seen. The sun or moon, near the horizon, is often thus strangely distorted.

When an extensive area of landscape or seascape is involved in such transformations, the display as a whole is called "fata morgana." The name is derived from Italian legendry, but the phenomenon is no more peculiar to the shores of Italy than is the "spectre of the Brocken" to a particular mountain in Germany. In both cases names originally of local application have become generic.

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