

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed August 26, 1935

ARCTIC MIRAGE

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Authority on Meteorology

Stefansson, in an account of his travels north of the Arctic circle, says:

"At most seasons one is considerably troubled with mirages, perhaps more in summer than winter, but in winter also. On my hunts at this time I was frequently deceived, not so much by the appearance of objects out of all natural proportion, but more especially by their apparent motion, and their disappearances and reappearances on the level snow surface. The mountains inland were visible, and were continually changing their shapes, but they looked unlike real mountains. More frequently they simulated the water-front appearances of New York skyscrapers, even to chimneys and whiffs of smoke. They would continually change their shape and order, and at times seemed to be marching in single file either to the east or west."

The mirages that thus involve extensive distortion and also undergo rapid changes are classified by science under the name of "fata morgana". The name originated along the shore of ^{the} Straits of Messina, where such displays are occasionally seen, but the phenomenon is much commoner in other parts of the world, and especially in the polar regions.

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