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The Rainbow and Its Phenomena

The true rainbow, except the lunar variety is so common that its occurrence is seldom reported as a matter of special interest. A rainbow always forms part of a circle the center of which is directly opposite the sun or moon. Lunar rainbows are rare, and we may ignore them for the present. Let us suppose a rainbow is seen an hour before sunset. The sun is in the west, the rainbow in the east. The sun is a short distance above the western horizon; the center of the circle of which the rainbow forms a part is exactly the same distance below the eastern horizon. Suppose, again, that the sun is just setting. If the eastern horizon is unobstructed by hills, trees and the like, the rainbow will form a complete semicircle; or, if observed from an elevated spot, more than a semicircle.

In estimating the dimensions of phenomena of this class the unscientific observer almost invariably uses such expressions as "about ten feet long," "as large as a cart wheel," and the like. Such expressions are purely relative and convey no precise meaning. The phenomena of the sky should always be measured in degrees of a great circle of the heavens. Such estimates can readily be made if the observer will remember that the distance from the horizon to the zenith is 90 degrees; that the horizon is 360 degrees around; that the diameter of the sun, and also that of the moon, is half a degree; that the distance across the top of the bowl in the Big Dipper is 10 degrees.

Measured by this scale, the radius of the ordinary or primary rainbow is from 40 to 42 degrees. Its inner margin is violet; its outer, red or orange. Outside the primary bow there can usually be seen a much fainter secondary bow, the radius of which is from 50 to 54 degrees. This bow has the colors of the primary bow in reverse order: the red is inside, the violet outside. Just inside the primary bow, and sometime also just outside the secondary bow, there may be seen under favorable conditions one or more fringes of prismatic colors, constituting what are known as supernumerary or spurious bows.

Such very briefly are the normal phenomena of the rainbow. This lovely meteor is, however, subject to many variations. For instance, the reflection of the sun in a sheet of water sometimes gives rise to a bow which intersects the one produced by the sun itself. The colors of the rainbow, moreover, vary considerably. Rainbows are always produced by the reflection and refraction of light from drops of water—never from ice crystals—and the coloration, as well as the breadth of the bow, depends upon the size of the drops. The larger the drops the narrower the bow and the brighter the colors. Sometimes we may see on a bank of fog a broad, almost colorless bow—the so-called "white rainbow"—the appearance of which depends upon the fact that a fog consists of very small droplets of water as compared with raindrops. The lunar rainbow is also as a rule, almost devoid of color, but for a different reason—namely, its feeble illumination.

The common saying,

*A rainbow in the morning**Is the shepherd's warning;**A rainbow at night**Is the shepherd's delight,*

is on the whole, well justified for the following reasons: We see the rainbow where rain is falling, while the sun is shining on the opposite side of the sky. Our rainstorms usually come from the west and pass away to the east. A morning rainbow can be seen only in the west, and indicates that the rain is approaching us. An evening rainbow is seen only in the east, and shows that the rain area is receding from us, giving place to clear skies.

The Children's Eyebrows

It is a great mistake to neglect the eyebrows. Many children begin life with beautifully pencilled eyebrows, which through carelessness are allowed to come out, making all the difference to the appearance. In the case of little girls especially, where the growth of the hair is less marked, vaseline should be applied to the eyebrows with a soft tooth-brush several times a week. If the eyelashes tend to come out, ask the chemist for a little golden ointment for the eyes, and apply it with a camel hair brush at bedtime.

The Tour of a Smile

My papa smiled this morning when
He came down stairs, you see,
At mamma; and when he smiled then
She turned and smiled at me. I went
And smiled at Mary Ann
Out in the kitchen and she lent
It to the hired man.

So then he smiled at some one, who
He saw, when going by;
Who also smiled and ere he knew
Had twinkles in his eye;
So he went to his office then
And smiled right at his clerk,
Who put some more ink on his pen
And smiled back from his work.

So when his clerk went home he smiled
Right at his wife, and she
Smiled over at their little child
As happy as could be;
And then their little child, she took
The smile to school, and when
She smiled at teacher from her book,
Teacher smiled back again.

And then the teacher passed on one
To little James McBride,
Who couldn't get his lessons done,
No matter how he tried;
And James took it home and told
How teacher smiled at him
When he was tired and didn't scold
But said "Don't worry Jim!"

And when I happened to be there
That very night to play
His mother had a smile to spare
Which came across my way;
And then I took it after a while
Back home and mamma said:
"Here is that very self-same smile
Come back with us to bed!"

—N. Y. Times

It's Mighty Comfortin'

Oh, it's mighty comfortin' when your
hair is gettin' thin,
And the wrinkles in your face have
come to stay,
Just to feel her little hand smoothin'
out each silver strand,
While you meet her lovin' look and
hear her say:

"John, my dear, it seems as though
every day you live you grow
Handsome than in the olden days."
And you smile back at your wife while
you think in all your life
You never heard a sweeter word of
praise.

Then, somehow, the teardrops rise, to
your dim old fadin' eyes
When you kiss the tender hand, still
white and small,
And you try to tell her how you loved
her then—you love her now,
But, bless me, if the words will come
at all?

For just then it comes to you to think
of trials she's gone through,
And borne without a murmur for your
sake;
You can only bow your head at the
loving things she's said,
And your poor old heart can only
ache and ache.

But she knows what ails you then, and
she kisses you again,
While you hear her gently whisper,
sweet and low;
"Life has brought more hopes than
fears; we have known more smiles
than tears;
You are the dearest dear of dears,
John Anderson, my Joe."

So it's comfortin', I say, when your hair
is getting gray,
And you're slipping down life's hill
a mighty fast,
Just to feel her little hand strokin' back
each silver strand,
While she whispers that she loves you
to the last.

—Eugene Field.

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