

ATMOSPHERIC CURIOSITIES.

MUCH of the superstition of the dwellers in mountainous lands has been traditionally fostered by unexplained natural phenomena. To them the supernatural and the awe-inspiring have a strange and powerful fascination. The mountain hunters of past centuries have seen unaccountable and terrible forms in the mountain mists, and legends have carried the phenomena from the plainly natural to the weirdly superhuman.

Professor Tyndall on one occasion, while travelling in the Alps, observed the shadow of his body projected at night-time on a mist by a lamp behind him, and a luminous circle surrounding the shadow. An enthusiastic traveller, Mr. J. A. Fleming, has for years been endeavouring to realize this phenomenon without the aid of a lamp. At last, on the summit of one of the Welsh hills, he and a friend succeeded. A gentle breeze thinned away the mists in front of the sun, and a burst of sunshine illumined the hill-tops. Along the valley the wind drove masses of thin mist, and on this they saw, to their surprise, the shadow of the summit of the hill on which they stood and their own sharply marked shadows projecting on it in giant shape. Surrounding these figures they observed two complete circular rainbows, quite concentric, the centre being the shadow of their heads. During all this time the sun was shining brightly on their backs. And in the Coolin Hills, in Skye, two Dundee gentlemen observed their shadows thrown against the precipitous side of a deep corrie two hundred feet distant.

Here are some other instances of the appearances of this phenomenon, as vouched for by authentic and trustworthy authorities. In the Sierra de Nevada, in Spain, Mr. Marr, of the

Goedetic Survey, was one day confronted by a monster figure of a man standing in mid-air before him, upon the top of a clearly defined mountain-peak, with the mist of the valley for a resting place. Around it were two circles of rainbow light and colour; on its head was a glorious halo, and from its body shot rays of colour. He was indescribably startled, and he threw up his arms at the sight of the awe-striking apparition of gigantic stature. Immediately on this movement the awful spectre of darkness threw out its arms and approached him. When the sun's brightness was obscured the shadow melted away. Mr. Whympers, in his "Ascent of the Matterhorn," mentions an instance in which the rainbow colours assumed the shape of crosses instead of circles. This effect occurring, as it did, soon after a fatal accident in the Alps, filled the minds of the guides with superstitious horror. To Mr. G. R. Gilbert, of Washington, a distinguished physicist, the phenomenon was also presented, when he was on the plateau of Table Cliff, in Utah (two miles above sea-level). The air was moist, and scattering clouds hugged the valley. Standing before sunset on the edge of the cliff, he saw his own shadow distinctly outlined on the cloud, apparently about fifty feet from him. About the head was a bright halo, with a diameter several times greater than the head. Outside the halo there appeared two concentric circles with brilliant rainbow colours. M. Lecoq has also witnessed the phenomenon. In March last, at half-past seven o'clock in the morning, he was riding on horseback up the slope of the deep ravine at the bottom of the mountains of the Puy-de-Dome. The wall was almost perpendicular;