

of a distant lake. But sometimes the phenomenon of a mirage occurs near the horizon, the sheet of water only touching the lower limit of the sky at a few points, in such wise that when the spectator stoops and again stands upright, the boundaries of the sky and of his reflected image first mingle and then abruptly separate. The points where contact has *not* taken place next appear as dark spots, whose forms, more or less fantastic, originate all kinds of illusions. To one person they seem like

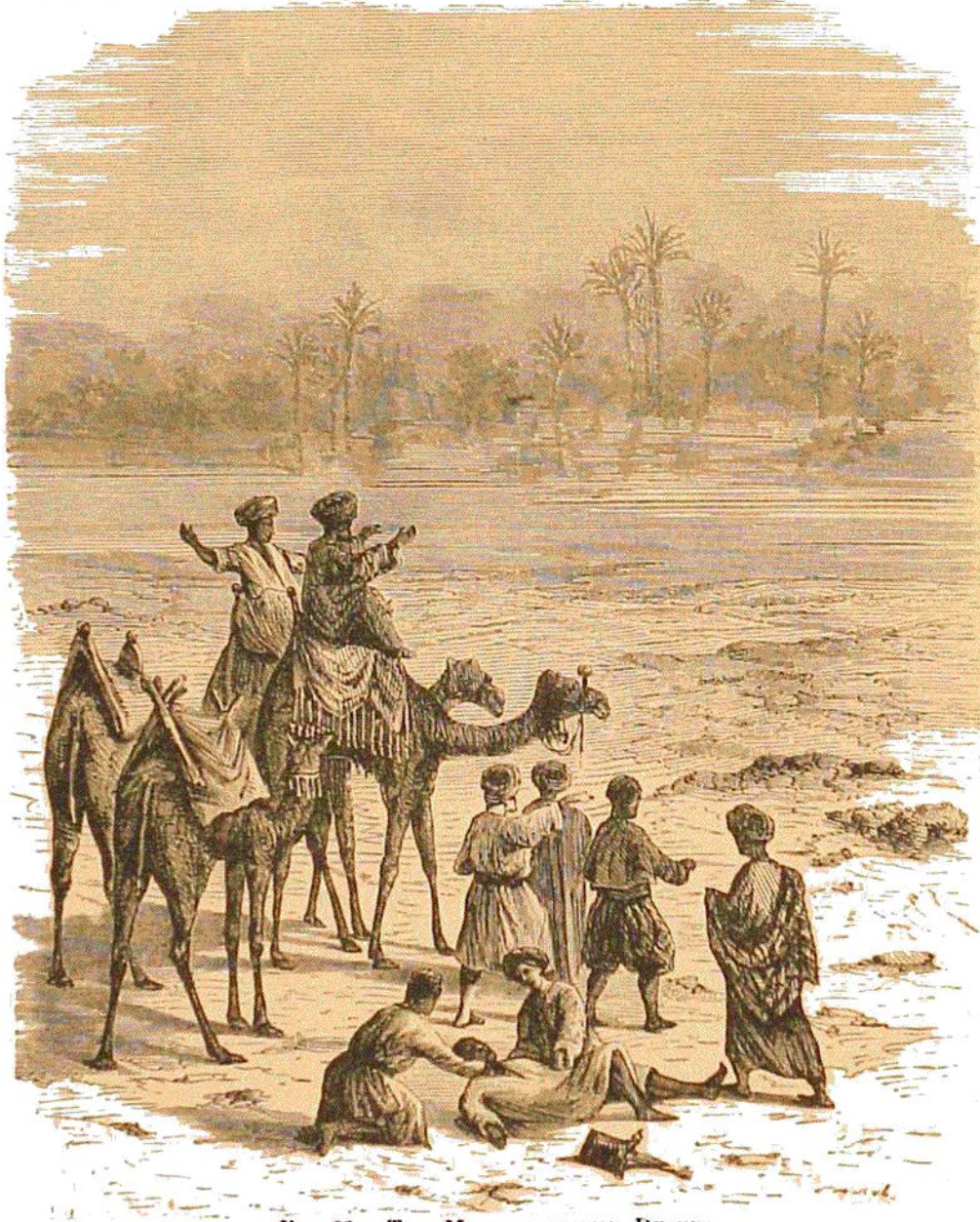


FIG. 89.--THE MIRAGE OF THE DESERT.

rocks, to another like trees—like islands, camels, ships at anchor—in fact, whatever figure an excited imagination may suggest.

To resume : the effects of the mirage can only be produced by real objects ; and only when these real objects are within a moderate distance from the spectator. Sometimes a reflection of the sky is simultaneously visible ; and the traveller fancies he sees, for example, a caravan wading through the water, and mirrored in the liquid surface.

Let us add that the production of this curious phenomenon is favoured by the