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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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IRREGULAR PATTERN OF RAIN

While most of us do not follow Mark Twain in installing a tin roof over our bedrooms that we may enjoy the pattering of rain, nevertheless, we can hear it and notice that when rain patters on the roof it is not always a regular drone. In a thundershower it is decidedly varied. During a steady rain in a virtual calm the sound is most regular, for then the rain-making processes are uninterruptedly at work and rain-diverting gusts are absent. In a thundershower, however, especially at its onset, what might be called the release of rain-drops from the up-moving wind is more or less patchy, and the irregular gusts of the squall wind tend to concentrate the falling drops on the gust fronts, where the wind is increasing in velocity.

When rain is "falling in sheets" this effect is very apparent in the marching streaks of descending raindrops. Sometimes one may look up some distance and see these gray streaks. In fact, they are impressive in their major features when viewed from a distance of some miles.

"Fallstreifen," or fall streaks as the Germans have called such an appearance of a distant shower whether reaching the earth or not, is a good descriptive term the equivalent of which has not yet entered American meteorological literature. A distant shower can be seen to be made up of a variety of concentrations of falling rain, each narrow streak having a long vertical extent owing to continued emissions from sources of different intensities of rain formation. These lines are sometimes turned this way or that by diverse winds at different levels.

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