A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WET PAVEMENTS

When rain falls the pavements under trees may stay dry for an appreciable period and then begin to get wet from the drippings while the uncovered pavement is starting to dry. After a shower, therefore, the distribution of wetness may be the reverse of that when the shower begins. But showers are of all degrees of intensity and duration. The very lightest rains cannot wet the roadway as fast as evaporation disposes of the water. Short showers may contain so little water that they fail to penetrate midsummer foliage.

The distribution of dryness resulting from evaporation from a wet pavement is an interesting commentary on the temperature of the surface. Where exposed to sunshine the street or road becomes hottest, of course. And this extra heat does not disappear all at once. When a rain occurs in the night, the pavement dries first where the sun has shone during the preceding afternoon, and the afternoon shadows of houses may be clearly marked on the pavement by the wet spots the morning after.

Wetness is sometimes produced simply by dew. Here again the cooler portions of the pavement become the wettest, and the warmer parts may even remain dry. Such a film of water forms not only on a clear quiet night, but also after cool weather when a muggy wind breathes upon the chilly surface. In summer, however, the contrasts of temperature are not often great enough for this type of wetting.

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