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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 28, 1930

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ABOUT DEW-PONDS

There are few places in the world where, in time of drought, it is necessary to seek water on the hilltops rather than in the valleys, and the region chiefly famous for this peculiarity is the "down" country of southern England. The water is found in so-called "dew-ponds" on the summits of the downs. Apparently these ponds are all of artificial origin. Some were constructed in prehistoric times, while others have been made during the present generation. A shallow depression is hollowed in the chalky soil, and this is lined with a compact layer of clay. Sometimes a layer of straw is placed either above or under the clay. An overlying layer of rubble is sometimes added to prevent perforation of the bottom by the hoofs of animals.

As these ponds remain well filled in the absence of rain, even when constantly used for watering sheep and cattle, it has generally been supposed that they are fed by dew. It has even been proposed to construct similar ponds in other parts of the world for the purpose of obtaining a scanty water supply. However, a series of investigations conducted some years ago by Mr. E. A. Martin, with the aid of a grant from the Royal Society, led to the conclusion that the real source of the water is the wet fog that often drifts in from the sea, and that dew has no important part in filling them.

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