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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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MYSTERIOUS SHOWERS

On the pavement beneath the shade trees bordering some city street a passer-by notices what appear to be rain drops in great numbers. No drops are seen except just under the trees, no rain has occurred for days, so here is a mystery that the next morning's newspaper dilates upon in a "box" on the front page. The marvelous event seems never to lose its novelty for the public at large, though it has been explained over and over again.

The drops consist of honeydew, secreted by insects, such as plant-lice, scale-insects and leaf-hoppers, all belonging to the order Homoptera. The sticky stuff does not evaporate so rapidly as water and therefore remains visible for a long time. The trees beneath which it is found are sometimes described as "weeping trees"; also as "rain trees," though the latter name is also applied to vegetable wonders of other kinds, including trees that, in a damp, warm climate, exude water directly from their pores, without the intervention of insects, and those that, as in the case of the famous one that formerly grew in the island of Ferro, catch water from drifting clouds or fog and shed it on the ground.

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