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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"MIRACULOUS" SHOWERS

A great deal of unnecessary mystery has often been made of the occasional falls from the sky of miscellaneous matter, living or non-living, in which our superstitious ancestors saw prodigies and portents, and in which the modern newspapermen sees good stories for publication in a first-page "box."

Leaving out of consideration falls of meteorites, which come from outer space, and deposits of substances spouted up by volcanoes, the showers in question usually owe their occurrence to the lifting and transporting powers of the wind. Few people realize the forces attained, at times, by ascending air currents. Not only are local atmospheric vortices -- tornadoes, waterspouts and desert dust whirls -- capable of carrying heavy objects far aloft, but the upward currents of much more extensive thunderstorms and squalls are often extremely violent. The lifting power of a thundersquall may be judged by the fact that an aviator, who was once caught in one, was carried upward when his plane was headed straight down and his engine was going full speed.

Once high in the air, objects may be carried great distances before they fall to earth. Dust and light material is sometimes thus transported thousands of miles. One more point remains to be explained. In order to constitute a conspicuous "shower" there must be a marked concentration of the falling material in a limited locality. In some cases the winds themselves may have blown in such a way that there was little spreading of a quantity of material lifted from a particular place-- as, for example, the many tons of pollen that may be blown at one time from a pine forest, causing a shower of "sulphur" a few miles away. More often, however, the material falls with rain and its concentration is due to the slope of the land. The stuff drains with the rainwater into hollows, where it accumulates in such quantities as to attract attention.

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