A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 16, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

DRIZZLE

The term "drizzle" is applied to fine, spray-like rain, or to a fall of such rain. As to the difference between such precipitation and ordinary rain, Dr. W.J. Humphreys, of the Weather Bureau, writes:

"If the drops are as much as one twenty-fifth of an inch in diameter, or larger, surely they do not constitute a drizzle, but rain, and fall with a velocity of, roughly, 10 to 25 feet per second, as determined by the size of the drops and the density of the air through which they are falling. Drizzle drops, so small that it would take about 125 of them to span an inch, fall only some two and a quarter feet a second, while cloud droplets, 1,200 of which would stretch barely an inch, fall only one twenty-fifth of a foot or thereabouts per second, or 144 feet in the course of an hour."

These figures refer to the speed of fall in still air. If the air has an upward component of motion, the actual speed of the drops is correspondingly less, and if the air is ascending at a speed greater than about two and a quarter feet a second, drizzle cannot occur, since the drops cannot fall through such air to the ground.

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