A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed May 19, 1932

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THE SIZES OF RAINDROPS

Several investigators have measured the sizes of raindrops. One way of doing this is to let the drops fall on a sheet of blotting paper or filter paper. It has been found by experiment that there is a definite relation between the size of a drop and the area of the wet patch it makes on such paper. In order to secure a permanent record, which can be measured at leisure, the surface of the paper is dusted with a dye-stuff, such as eosin, mixed with talcum powder.

Another plan is to let the drops form casts of themselves by falling into a shallow layer of flour or some similar material. Experiments made with measured drops, produced for the purpose and let fall from various heights, show that the casts thus formed correspond very closely to the size of the drops. Thousands of raindrops were measured in this way by the late Wilson A. Bentley, of Jericho, Vermont, well-known for his microphotographs of snow crystals.

Bentley found that drops of very different dimensions fall at one time. The commonest sizes he recorded are from one-thirtieth to one-eighth of an inch in diameter. Some drops had a diameter of a quarter and even a third of an inch. Many drops were too small to form casts and were estimated to be less than a hundredth of an inch in diameter.

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