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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RED HAILSTONES

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Rain reddened with dust, blown in most cases from deserts, is fairly common in some parts of the world; notably in southern Europe, where so-called "blood rains," once an object of superstitious terror, have been recorded since remote antiquity. Where there is so much red rain, there must sometimes be red hail, and we read in an article by Ivan E. Houk:

"Sometimes colored raindrops within a cloud formation drift into the vertical air currents that accompany the typical thunderstorm and are carried up into the regions where the temperatures are below freezing; whereupon colored hailstones are formed. Hailstones of such a nature fell near Castlewellan, England, on May 7, 1885. In this instance about one stone in a hundred had a decided red color all through its formation, the amount of coloring matter present being sufficient to stain the fingers when the ice melted. A similar case occurred in Russia, in June, 1880, only in this instance the colored hailstones were a pale red instead of a decided red, the amount of coloring matter present either being somewhat less than in the English storm, or of a somewhat lighter color."

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