

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt  
but intended for use  
May 15, 1928

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 8, 1928

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology

THE WEATHERMAN'S SHORTHAND

Two systems of shorthand are used by meteorologists in keeping and publishing records of weather. One of these is a set of arbitrary symbols, most of which were adopted at a meteorological congress held in Vienna in 1873, though a few are of more recent origin. These International Meteorological Symbols, as they are called, are quite simple in form and are therefore easily written, but types for printing them are not available in ordinary type fonts, and hence their use in publications is somewhat restricted.

The other system is not subject to the same limitation. It is known as the Beaufort Weather Notation and consists of letters, used singly or in combination. In its original form it was devised by Admiral Beaufort, of the British Navy, who also introduced the more familiar Beaufort Wind Scale. Both date from about 1806, and were adopted by the British Admiralty for use in ships' logs in 1838. The weather notation has been considerably modified and enlarged since Beaufort's time. It is now used by British and American sailors, by British observers on land, and in publications of the British Meteorological Office, including daily weather maps.

In the latest British version of the Beaufort notation capital letters are used to denote unusual intensity of a phenomenon. Thus "R" is the entry for heavy rain, while "r" indicates moderate rain, and the same letter followed by a small "o" written as a subscript below the line, means light rain. The prefix "i" is used to indicate "intermittent" or "occasional". For example, "if" denotes occasional fog. Continuity is denoted by repeating the letter. Thus "SS" means continuous heavy snow.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE,  
21st and B Sts.,  
Washington, D.C.