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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WIRE TROUBLES CAUSED BY SEA SPRAY

One of the most severe gales in the history of the British Isles began soon after noon on Friday, Oct. 28, 1927, reached its maximum at midnight, and was practically over by 7 a. m. Saturday morning. After the storm the electric power companies in many districts reported trouble with overhead transmission lines. The automatic switches, which are set to break the current when it exceeds a definite amount, had been constantly in action, indicating an excessive current on the lines. The most puzzling feature of the affair was that in South Wales the wire trouble had prevailed Friday evening, while the storm was in progress, while in other parts of the country it did not occur until about 12 hours after the storm was over. The explanation turned out to be as follows:

During the gale, which was from the southwest, great quantities of sea spray were blown up by the wind all along the west coast. The spray was carried inland by the wind and coated the insulators of the power lines in South Wales with a layer of salt water, which practically short-circuited them, so that the safety switches came into action. Farther inland the air was so dry that the spray carried by the winds was evaporated. A coating of salt was left on the insulators, and though it was damp enough to stick to them it did not completely destroy the insulation. After the storm the air grew damper in this region, and as salt takes up moisture readily from the air a layer of salt water gradually spread over the insulators and the trouble began. Early Sunday morning general rains began, the insulators were washed clean, and the trouble was over.

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