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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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BRITISH DROUGHTS

It is a common impression on this side of the Atlantic that the rainfall of the British Isles is normally very heavy, and that a drought severe enough to cause the closing of factories and a water famine in towns, such as has been reported in the recent press despatches from England, is a most unusual event in that part of the world. Britain is a rainy country in the sense that rain is normally of very frequent occurrence there, but the amount of rainfall is roughly about the same as in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada, and droughts are not uncommon. The most severe one of recent times in England was that of 1921. In the southeastern counties there were extensive areas in which the rainfall for the year was less than 60 per cent. of the normal, and in some districts it was less than half the normal. For the British Isles as a whole the driest year since the beginning of the nineteenth century was 1887.

British meteorologists define an "absolute drought" as a period of more than 14 consecutive days absolutely without rain, a "partial drought" as a period of more than 28 consecutive days, the mean rainfall of which does not exceed .01 inch per day, or the total fall for the 28 days at most barely exceeds a quarter of an inch, and an "engineers' drought" as a period of three or more consecutive months, the aggregate rainfall of which does not exceed half the average.

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