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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 30, 1930.

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RECORD-BREAKING WEATHER

A paradox familiar to meteorologists is the fact that normal weather rarely occurs. For example, the average temperature for the month of January at Chicago for the period of 83 years 1830-1912, inclusive, was 24, but there were only two years during that period--viz, 1832 and 1903--when the mean temperature for January was 24; in every other year it was higher or lower.

It is a somewhat less familiar paradox, that the extreme recorded values of the various weather elements--such as the "record" high or low temperature--are constantly being surpassed at one place or another, so that the breaking of weather records is a more or less continuous performance. W. A. Mattice, of the U. S. Weather Bureau, has recently examined the statistics of highest and lowest temperatures recorded month by month during long series of years at about 200 regular stations of that bureau in order to find out how often new "records" of these elements are established.

It appears that during the interval of 43 months from June, 1926, to December, 1929, inclusive, there were 501 cases at the 200 stations in which the highest or lowest temperature previously recorded for a certain month at a certain place was equaled or exceeded. In 230 of these cases the previous "record" was broken. A summary by months shows that "records" for highest or lowest values for months were equaled or exceeded in 41 out of the 43 months, or 95 per cent. of the time, and that "records" of both maximum and minimum temperatures were equaled or exceeded in 26 months, or 60 per cent. of the time.

An analysis of daily rather than monthly temperature values would doubtless reveal a vastly greater amount of record-breaking. In other words, such a statement as "Yesterday was the warmest (or coldest) May 6th ever recorded at Blankville" describes a species of record-breaking that, in a country as large as the United States, happens somewhere every day, and that at Blankville itself probably happens several times a year.

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