— Science Notes. —

RAINFALL IN THE BRITISH ISLES.

'It is not easy to give in an hour a complete account of the work of more than thirty years." These were the words of Mr. Symons, F.R.S., at a recent meeting of the Society of Arts, at which he gave some account of his work in organising the observation and record of the rainfall in different parts of the British Isles.

Mr. Symons at first recalled a suggestion made to the same Society nearly forty years ago, that an organisation for recording the rainfall should be made, with an observer to every 5 or 10 square miles. The cost was estimated at £26,000 or £13,000 a year, according to the number of stations and observers employed. The gentleman who proposed this organisation expressed his opinion that the expenditure would be a wise one, considering the importance of the subject in relation to water supply, flood prevention, and agriculture. The suggestion has. to a great extent, been made a reality by Mr. Symons and his assistants ; but, as he said, " without a farthing from Government." For the year 1859, Mr. Symons obtained records from 100 different stations, all in England and Wales. He has now rather over, than under, 3,000 stations, and these embrace Scotland and Ireland as well.

Several different kinds of rain and snow gauges are employed ; a variety, known as the float gauge, is necessary on places like Scawfell, where it is not possible to take the gauge every day. A float gauge is said to be a very dangerous instrument unless properly managed. A stick is attached to the float when it is required to ascertain the height of the water, and, until experience proved it to be a source of error, this stick was left in connection with the float. The stick, carried above the receiving surface, intercepted, and delivered into the gauge a quantity of rain which would otherwise not have entered it, and a series of such float-gauges once cost a Corporation £125,000 ; they made the rainfall appear greater than it actually was, and compensation to millowners having been fixed in accordance with the wrong gauges, the compensation had to be bought off.

The name of Seathwaite, in the Lake District, is familiar to most persons as the wettest station in England. A gauge has been kept there for half a century, and the average annual rainfall is 140 inches, about six times that of London. There is, however, a hill about half a mile from Seathwaite, on the shoulder of which the average rainfall is about 175 inches.

Ireland has a reputation for being very wet, but no part of it shows a rainfall nearly equal to that of the English Lakes and the west of Scotland. The rain in Ireland is frequent, but not heavy.

Mr. Symons has kept a record of the rainfall at Camden Square, London, for 35 years, and as instances of minimum and maximum records gives the following : During the month of February, 1892, only one-hundredth part of an inch of rain fell, and in the storm of June 23rd, 1878, 3¼ inches fell in an hour and a half. February, March and April are the driest months of the year, and they differ very little in their rainfall ; October is the wettest month, but July, August and September are not far behind it.

Mr. Symons has no ambition to be a weather prophet and makes no predictions, but he gives two rules which appear to have been illustrated ever since 1812 :— (1) That every year ending with 4 has had less than the average rainfall, except when that rule collided with the other rule, which was (2) that every twelfth year back and forward from 1860 has had more than the average rainfall.

If the present year proves no exception to the rule, the rainfall will be below the average, for the first rule does not collide with the second.

Notes on Art.

THE BURLINGTON FINE ARTS' CLUB.

Exhibition of Japanese Lacquer and Metal Work.

This Exhibition, though it is not actually open to the public as it is held in a private club, is nevertheless not inaccessible, and anyone who is really interested in Japanese Art can readily obtain admission by writing to the Committee of the Club (17, Savile Row) for a card, which may also be obtained through a member. A great treat awaits those who are so fortunate as to visit the Exhibition. The specimens are admirably arranged, and are described in a really magnificent and elaborate catalogue which has been prepared by by such well-known authorities as Dr. W. Anderson, Professor Church, Mr. E. Gilbertson, and Mr. E. Dillon, while MrGowland, late of the Imperial Mint at Osaka, has not only rendered good service by assisting in the arrangement of the exhibits, but has provided an elaborate glossary of Japanese words and terms used in the catalogue.

We will begin with the lacquer work. Really good, works in lacquer are costly, but any one can purchase, literally, for a few pence a small tray or article in lacquer, and an examination of it will render it easy to understand the skill and labour devoted by that most interesting nation of artists, the Japanese, to the beautiful objecs with which the cases are filled. The problem is to take a slender basis of wood, and cover it with successive layers of varnish, or lacquer, and to adorn it with raised ornament and Inlays of gold, silver and pearl in rich colour. The learned article on lacquer in the catalogue, by Mr. G. Cilbertson, shows how ancient the art really is, for, apart from legendary information, it seems clear that in the temple of Tōdaiji, at Nara, there are two lacquer boxes for containing sacred writings, which are undoubtedly of Japanese make, and these are attributed to the third century of our era. The earliest authenticated examples of Japanese lacquer are a scarf-box and a scabbard of a sword, preserved in the Skāsō-in belonging to Tōdaiji, at Nara, and their dates are respectively about the years 621 and 724. Red lacquer seems to have been known as early as the time of the Emperor Temmu (673—686), but it is impossible, in the limited space of this paper, to trace the history of lacquer work. It differs essentially from our European varnishes which are composed of

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