

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM.

EXTRAORDINARY DELUGE AT WHEATLEY.

The heavy thunderstorms that have encircled North-Western Europe during- the past few days have caused great damage to property and serious loss of life. Fortunately, in the South Midlands fatalities have been few and far between. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether any village in the Kingdom can show a more extraordinary record of rainfall and flood than that of Wheat- ley, six miles east of Oxford. This village is situated in a hollow, with steep slopes on the north, west and south, and is drained by a brook which empties itself in turn into the River Thames. Thursday's storm appears to have made Wheatley the centre of disturbance, and throughout the day the villagers were absolutely at its mercy. Hailstones as large as marbles fell with the rain and melted as soon as they touched the earth, and five times did the storm encircle the village. Some idea of its intensity may be ascertained from the authentic records of the rain-gauge in the possession of Mr. Leyshon, the schoolmaster. The gauge was emptied, as is the custom, at 9 a.m. on Thursday, and the reading entered in a book kept for the purpose. At 12.42 the storm broke, and at 1.20 Mr. Leyshon emptied the gauge on account of its limited capacity. It then recorded 2.675 inches. Twenty minutes later a further 1.665 inches was on record, while at 6 p.m. .857 inch had to be added to the record from 9 a.m. onwards. At 9 a.m. next morning there was a further .292 inch, bringing the total for the 24 hours up to 5.491 inches. Between 12.42 and 1.40, roughly an hour, over 4 inches of rain fell in the village, representing about 425 tons of water to the acre. It is hardly necessary to suggest that the culvert through the main street was quite unable to cope with the flood. At the western end of the village a wall was washed down and the streets transformed into river-beds. A torrent some 3ft. deep swept through the heart of the village, carrying furniture and domestic utensils of all kinds with it. The post-office, into which the water swelled to the depth of 2ft. 6in., was immediately isolated, and telegraphic and telephonic communication dislocated. So swift was the current down this street that a passage across the road was attended with serious danger, and only made possible in some instances by the use of a rope. In one low-lying house in Crownstreet the water reached a depth of nearly 6ft., the housewife only making her escape through the bedroom - window. In the same house the furniture floated round and round for some hours, and to-day the Goddened walls and an harmonium. with the keys warped and fixed, show, beyond dispute, the havoc wrought. In the farmyard of Mr. T. J. Robbins a rick, weighing between and 2 tons, was 'transported bodily upon the flood to the limits of the yard, and numerous ducks and geese were drowned. The garden crops were ruined, the potato plants being mutilated as with a reaping-hook, whilst on the allotments near Littleworth several holdings were swept almost clean of their produce. No such storm has been recorded at Wheatley within living memory, and it is doubtful whether such a heavy rainfall has been before experienced in Oxford-