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THE COLD SPELL OF MID-MARCH IN VICTORIA RE-EXAMINED

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During the two periods 1859-1878 and 1879-1898 the daily temperatures at Melbourne showed a marked drop from about 11 March to 20 March followed by a distinct rise of temperature (Barnard, 1900). This trend was continued from 1908 to 1937 (Loewe, 1939) with a cooling of almost 6°F from 12 to 15 March. The feature appeared to be persistent in the climate of Victoria; it was also found at other stations as far west as Eucla and was accompanied by a turn of the resulting wind at Melbourne from nearly due north to nearly south and a complete reversal in the mean synoptic charts for 30 years for 12 and 15 March. Now new observations for 34 years have become available and it seemed worthwhile to check the persistence of this seemingly well established 'singularity'.

After applying a correction for the mean temperature trend during the month for the days around the middle of March the following deviations from the mean of the month have been found for the different periods (Table 1). The values for 1859-98 are doubly overlapping 5 day-means; this smooths the curve of temperature changes, diminishes the size of the deviations and delays the onset of the minimum temperature near the middle of the month. The table shows that the singularity of temperature which seemed quite persistent during 70 years around the turn of the century, has since 1937 almost completely disappeared, a revealing sign of the unreliability of this kind of atmospheric anomalies.

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Table 1 Temperature deviations at Melbourne around mid March, °F

Day	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
1859 -	+ .8	+ .7	+ .8	+ .7	+ .8	+ .8	+ .6	+ .3	- .2	- .4	- .6	- .9	- .8	- .7	- .6	- .3	+ .1
1898																	
1908 -	-	-	-	+1.0	+3.0	+2.5	-1.2	-2.8	-2.4	-1.2	+ .1	+ .7	-	-	-	-	-
1937																	
1938 -	+1.4	- .4	-1.6	+1.3	- .1	- .8	- .8	0	+1.0	+1.1	+1.5	+ .2	- .8	- .5	- .3	-1.3	
1971																	
($\frac{\text{max}+\text{min}}{2}$)																	
1938 -	+1.3	+ .5	-1.4	+ .3	0	- .7	- .7	+ .3	+ .5	+ .6	+1.1	+ .2	- .2	-1.5	+ .2	- .9	
1971																	
9 am																	

