

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT.

MARCH 1885.

SECTION I.

GENERAL SUMMARY FOR THE MONTH.

THE weather during March was quiet and rather cold, dry (especially over our eastern counties), and somewhat foggy. Pressure was in excess of the average by nearly 0·2 inch, and very largely in excess of that for February. The mean values show that an anticyclone lay over Ireland and England, with slight gradients for Westerly winds in the north, and these conditions agree very closely with the prevalence of winds from various points shown on Plate V. Temperature was, on the whole, below the mean, and lower than that of February. Its range was somewhat large at the inland stations, but there was nothing in either the maxima or minima worthy of special mention. Bright sunshine was very deficient in the north-east and north of England, and in London (apparently owing to fog), but at our western and southern coast stations the amounts recorded were larger.

March 1-2.—The distribution of pressure over our Islands during this period was chiefly anticyclonic, and the gradients favourable for winds from various quarters. At 8 a.m. on the 1st light North-westerly and Northerly breezes prevailed over the North Sea and eastern parts of our Islands, while Easterly and South-easterly winds were felt in the west. Temperature was very low, the weather was fair and dry, and fog prevailed at some of our inland stations. The barometer then fell, especially in the west, the South-easterly winds spread almost all over the kingdom and veered to the Southward, with an increase of temperature, and while depression No. XII.* moved in a northerly direction outside our extreme western coasts, the anticyclone travelled south-eastwards and eastwards across the North Sea.

March 3-6.—Pressure distribution now changed decidedly; the dominant systems were cyclonic, but small, and the conditions very complex. The barometer was at first highest to the eastward of the North Sea, and lowest to the westward of Ireland, and the gradients were rather steep. The winds were Southerly to South-easterly, moderate in the east and strong in the west. A well-marked depression (No. XIII.*) now approached our western coasts, causing a rapid fall of the barometer in Ireland, and a less decided fall elsewhere. Its centre reached the neighbourhood of Galway on the evening of the 3rd (see Weekly Weather Report, 1885, p. 38), but there its progress was checked, and the system underwent considerable modification. A subsidiary disturbance was in the meantime formed near Prawle Point, and as this moved east-north-eastwards, a large trough of low pressure was formed across the southern parts of our Islands and the Netherlands, and separating a high-pressure system over the northern parts of our area from another one in the south. The weather was very unsettled, and rain fell generally, especially on our north-western coasts. The whole system now moved slowly to the eastward, its eastern part dispersed,

* See Section II. and Map 2 Plate VI. for the history and tracks of depressions.

and the barometer rose, but the general distribution of pressure underwent little change till late on the 5th, when a new and complex cyclonic system (No. XIV.)* advanced towards the west of France from the Atlantic. The North-easterly wind now spread all over our Islands and freshened; some rain fell in the south, a few snow and hail showers in the north, and temperature fell decidedly over England. Over the southern parts of France the rainfall was considerable, and the wind blew hard from South-west and West. The progress of the new disturbance was rapid, and by the morning of the 7th it had entirely disappeared from our area; but the North German reports show that it had undergone great modifications, and its centre had reached Poland.

March 7-15.—High-pressure (anticyclonic) conditions now became prevalent, but were not completely established until after the 8th—the distribution during the 7th and 8th being partly cyclonic and partly anticyclonic. The systems advanced from the westward, so that on the 9th it was only their eastern portions which lay over the United Kingdom. By the 10th, however, the United Kingdom was completely covered by anticyclone No. VIII. (p. 29), and while Westerly breezes of little strength prevailed at the northern stations, Easterly winds were felt in the south. Temperature fell steadily, so that at the western stations the minimum for the month was recorded on or about the 10th. (See Tables V. and VI., Section III.) The night frosts were sharp on the ground, and the diurnal range of temperature was large. The weather became fair generally, and the air dry; fog or haze occurred frequently, and the barometer rose to its maximum height for the month. The changes from day to day were slight until the 14th, when the mercury began to fall—first at the northern, and afterwards at the more southern stations. The anticyclone now moved south-eastwards and southwards, and became less clearly marked; Westerly and Southerly winds began to spread over the country from the northward, and depressions again commenced moving in an easterly and south-easterly direction towards Norway at a great distance from our extreme northern coasts. The first one passed by at too great a distance for its movements to be indicated on Map 2, Plate VI., but its effects on our weather were shown by the decrease of haze at our northern stations on the 15th and 16th, an increase in the strength of the Westerly current of wind there, and a commencement of showery weather in the north-west and west, which subsequently extended to the other parts of the kingdom. (See the Daily and Weekly Reports for this time.) The second depression was No. XV.,* which reached our northern coasts on the 17th, and with its advance the whole character of pressure distribution and of weather over our Islands changed.

March 17-22.—The weather now became changeable, cyclonic and anticyclonic systems being alternately prevalent—the wind varying between West and North-west in direction, and from a moderate breeze to a gale in force. Temperature was unsteady, the air being at times mild, but on the whole cold and somewhat penetrating. Cold showers of snow, hail, sleet, and rain prevailed frequently, the amounts measured were, however, small, except at some of our northern and north-eastern stations, and there were frequent bright intervals, which, when they occurred at night-time, produced sharp frosts on the ground. It was towards the close of this period that a small shallow depression (No. XVIII.)* was formed over the north of Ireland, and travelling in a south-easterly direction, brought to our south-eastern counties the heaviest fall of wet snow, followed by the most rapid thaw, which we have experienced this season. In its rear the barometer rose fast, and the wind veered Northwards and there was a temporary spell of fine cold weather.

March 23.—The weather during this day was purely anticyclonic, the system (No. X.) advancing over us from the Atlantic, and passing steadily in a south-easterly direction during the day (see p. 30). A very sharp frost occurred over England at night, but on the following morning the wind was Southerly again on almost all our coasts, accompanied by a decided but very temporary increase of temperature.

* See Section II. and Map 2, Plate VI., for the history and tracks of depressions.

March 24-29.—The distribution of pressure and the weather now became changeable again. Anticyclonic conditions were chiefly prevalent over England, but cyclonic over Scotland and the north of Ireland, and these latter occasionally spread completely over the kingdom as certain irregularly-formed subsidiary depressions travelled over us (see particularly the maps for the 27th and 29th in the Daily and Weekly Reports). The winds varied quickly from South to West, and North-west, and *vice versa*, the range of temperature was large and the changes somewhat irregular, but on the whole there was a decided deficiency from the average conditions of warmth, except in the north of Great Britain.

March 30.—The barometer now rose rapidly, and the month closed with a new anticyclone lying from west-south-west to east-north-east across the southern parts of our Islands, the Channel, and the Netherlands, while south-westerly gradients prevailed in the north.