

MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT.

MAY 1884.

SECTION I.

GENERAL SUMMARY FOR THE MONTH.

THE weather experienced over the British Islands during May was of two distinct kinds : (1) cyclonic, extending from the 1st to the 19th ; (2) anticyclonic, from the 20th to the end of the month. In the former period the distribution of pressure was very varied, sometimes complex, and several depressions passed over the northern and north-western parts of the kingdom. Showers occurred frequently separated by bright intervals in the east and south, much rain fell in Scotland and the north of Ireland, and thunderstorms prevailed locally. Temperature, which was occasionally rather high over England, varied greatly as the Southerly and North-westerly currents of wind alternately prevailed, and, except in the south and east, bright sunshine was very deficient. In the latter period the thermometer was low—especially during some of the clearer nights—the air was dry and searching, the winds were light, being chiefly Easterly or North-easterly in direction, and no cyclonic system of importance showed itself near our coasts. Pressure was high generally, and its range was very small over our southern counties. On the 31st the anticyclonic conditions appeared to be breaking up.

May 1-6.—During this period the distribution of pressure over north-western Europe was of a complex character. At first two high-pressure areas were observed, one over northern Europe, the other over Spain, while the lowest readings were reported from our north-west coasts. Some well-marked low-pressure systems passed along to the north-westward of Scotland about parallel to the direction of the broken arrow marked "A" on Map 2 Plate XI., and some shallow local disturbances were developed over the United Kingdom in the "hollow" of low pressure which separated the two anticyclones referred to above. Under these circumstances unsettled, cool, cloudy, showery weather was experienced over our Islands generally, and thunderstorms prevailed in several places. The winds varied in direction, from West or South-west at our own stations to South-east and East in Norway, the former blowing strongly at times and exhibiting a tendency to "veer" rather than to "back." On May 4th depression No. XXXIV.* came over Scotland from the north-westward, and as it passed south-eastwards to the North Sea the wind on our coasts veered to North-west and temperature fell, but the weather so far from clearing remained showery, and severe thunderstorms occurred locally—notably over the south-east of England on the 5th. (See the Daily and Weekly Weather Reports for this time.)

May 7-11.—The high-pressure area over northern Europe now gave way, while a well-formed anticyclone (No. VIII., p. 53) appeared over France; the barometer fell again at our western and north-western stations, and the cyclonic system No. XXXV.,* appeared off our northern coasts. The wind soon backed to the South-westward (though varying somewhat in Scotland), temperature rose, and the weather began to improve over the southern and eastern counties of England, but it continued dull and showery for a time over the western and northern parts of the kingdom. The 10th and 11th were very fine over

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

England, and a great improvement was observed in Ireland and Scotland, for, as the depressions in the north broke up, the anticyclone over France extended northwards, in a ridge, which spread over our eastern counties and the North Sea to Norway. The wind over the British Islands backed to the Southward and fell very light, the sky cleared, and the daily maximum temperatures on the 11th were as high as 83° at Bawtry, 80° at Newton Reigny, and 78° or 79° at most of our other inland stations.

May 12-14 was another changeable, unsettled, and thundery period, in which a second, but small, subsidiary anticyclone appeared off our south-western coasts, between which and the larger system over Germany, Denmark, and Scandinavia, there was a mingling of North-westerly and Southerly winds, which soon produced heavy showers and local thunderstorms, the thermometer falling fast. It was during this time that the peculiarly shaped depression No. XXXVI.* passed over the country.

May 15-19.—Pressure was now highest in an anticyclone (No. IX., p. 53) which lay over France, and lowest to the northward and north-westward of the United Kingdom. Fine warm weather prevailed at all our southern stations, but in Scotland and the north of Ireland two depressions (Nos. XXXVII. and XXXIII.*) kept the weather in a squally, rainy condition, so that during the week which ended on the 19th the excess of rain in the north and north-west amounted to 2·3 inches at Stornoway, 0·3 inch at Wick and Sumburgh Head, 0·6 inch at Silloth and Donaghadee, and 0·7 inch at Armagh, while over nearly the whole of England there was a marked deficit, and over our southern counties the total fall amounted to only a few hundredths of an inch. (See the Weekly Weather Report, p. 80.)

May 20-30.—A high-pressure area now appeared in the south-west, and, moving north-eastwards, spread over the whole of north-western Europe. Anticyclonic conditions, therefore, became general, and were experienced until the end of the month (see Nos. X. and XI. in the Table of Anticyclonic Systems, p. 53). As this change was effected the wind over our Islands fell very light, and backed round from North-west, first to the southward, and then to the eastward; temperature decreased, so that, although the sun's rays were warm, the air was dry and searching, the nights were keen, and sharp frosts occurred on the grass. By the 22nd the centre of the anticyclone No. X. had reached North Germany, whence a ridge extended westwards over the North Sea and our Islands, causing Easterly breezes to prevail in the south, and Southerly airs in the north. Pressure then gave way over Scandinavia and the Baltic, while it increased over the United Kingdom, and the result was that the 24th found a new anticyclonic centre over our northern districts (see No. XI., p. 53), which did away with the Southerly breezes recently prevailing there, and caused the cold, dry, Easterly wind to spread all over the kingdom. Vegetation began to suffer greatly, both from the cold wind and from want of rain. The only stations at which there was not an actual deficit of rain in the week ending on the 26th were Hurst Castle, Pembroke, and Waterford. The eastern, northern, and north-western counties of England were rainless. During the remainder of the month the movements of this system were slight and irregular, and it was not until near its close that any signs of its giving way were observed. The barometer then began to fall somewhat generally, and on the 31st the anticyclone was moving decidedly in a southerly direction, causing Westerly breezes to appear at our extreme northern stations.

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