

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS.

MAY, 1904.

General Summary.—The weather during this month was exceedingly variable in character. For the normally brightest part of the year it was unusually dull, only the third week being marked by much sunshine. A singular feature associated with the prevalent dullness was an intensely dark gloom of brief duration which visited the Metropolis about 10 o'clock in the forenoon of the 27th, and was accompanied by barometric oscillations of a somewhat unusual character. Rain was of frequent occurrence, but as a rule the individual amounts were not large; early in the month some sleet or snow fell locally in the northern districts. At various times thunderstorms were experienced in many parts of the kingdom. At Oundle, on the 6th, much damage was caused to vegetation by very large hail which fell during a thunderstorm, and in the night of the 30th there was a severe and destructive thunderstorm without rain. Though the conditions were of an unsettled type the disturbances which visited our shores were not accompanied by much wind, few days being marked by as much as a fresh gale anywhere. As often happens at this season the country experienced a touch of winter cold round the 8th, on which date very low maximum temperatures were recorded. A less marked visitation of cold occurred on the 21st. For the month as a whole pressure was below the average; the winds were rather variable in direction, and of no great strength; temperature was in excess over Eastern England, mostly in defect elsewhere; rainfall generally was above the normal; and bright sunshine was decidedly less than usual in nearly all localities.

Pressure.—*Mean at 8 a.m.* ranged from slightly above 30·0 ins. at Jersey to below 29·85 ins. in the north-west of Ireland and west and north of Scotland, to 29·81 ins. at Stornoway. At Jersey the value barely exceeded the average,* but everywhere else there was a deficiency, amounting to 0·11 in. at Blacksod Point and Malin Head. The distribution of mean pressure differed from the normal in there being a somewhat steeper gradient of 0·2 in. between the Hebrides and the Channel Islands. *Highest* readings were recorded on various dates, 30·27 ins. at Jersey on the 12th, 30·29 ins. at Valencia on the 19th, and 30·25 ins. at Sumburgh Head on the 30th. *Lowest* readings occurred on the 2nd, 29·18 ins. at Malin Head, and on the 18th, 29·20 ins. at Sumburgh Head. *Range* was moderate in all districts, from about 0·7 in. at some of the south-western stations to slightly more than an inch at Malin Head, Aberdeen and Sumburgh Head.

Depressions.—Several disturbances visited our neighbourhood in the course of the month, following very variable paths, as shown on Map 2, Plate V., but they were generally very shallow, the barometer rarely sinking below 29·5 ins. The deepest was that of the early morning of the 2nd, with the mercury slightly below 29·2 ins. as the centre crossed the north of Ireland and the south of Scotland. That of the 18th beyond the north of Scotland was nearly as deep.

Anticyclones.—The central space of a well-formed high pressure system moved from the Atlantic across our islands on the 19th and 20th, and finally passed on to Scandinavia and Russia. Nearly all the other anticyclones of the month had their centres on the Continent to the southward or south-eastward, but towards the close, one passed eastward beyond the north of Scotland. In no instance did the barometer attain the level of 30·5 ins. at the foreign stations.

Winds.—The direction of the wind was very variable, with a preponderance from South-East or East breezes at some stations, and from South to West at others. Gale force was attained on 9 days at Blacksod Point, on 7 days at Malin Head, and on 5 days at Deerness, Stornoway, Durham and Jersey.

Temperature.—*Mean at sea level* ranged from 55° in London and at Southampton, and above 53° over the greater part of the southern counties of England and in the Channel Islands to below 50° over nearly the whole of Scotland and the extreme north of Ireland, and down to nearly 45° in the Shetlands. The general distribution over the kingdom did not differ greatly from the normal. The mean values were above the average* generally over the eastern half of England, by as much as 3° at Clacton-on-Sea and 3°·8 at Shoeburyness. In nearly all other districts they were in defect, but in few places by as much as 1°. The extremes occurred on very varied dates. *Highest* readings 78° at Bettws-y-Coed, Laudale and in London, 77° at Tunbridge Wells, and 76° at Maidenhead, Aberystwyth, Llandudno and Glencarron, but in Ireland 71° at Edenfel was the maximum. There were some very cold days, notably about the 8th, when maxima below 50° were commonly experienced, 43° at Hillington, Cheadle and Marchmont, 42° at Darwen, 41° at Braemar, and 40° at Lairg. Again, between the 20th and 22nd, and on the 28th, the thermometer failed to reach 50° in places. *Lowest* night values recorded were 32° and under at only a few stations, 29° at Braemar and Wokingham, and 27° at Garforth. *Range* varied a good deal, amounting to 40° and upwards in many localities, 45° at Bettws-y-Coed, 44° at Garforth, Glencarron, Tunbridge Wells and in London, and 43° at Maidenhead and Bramley. At Scilly it was only 21°, at Deerness 20°, and at Sumburgh Head 19°. *Vapour Pressure* ranged from 0·34 in. at Jersey, and 0·33 in. at Dungeness, Scilly and Roche's Point to below 0·28 in. all over Scotland and 0·25 in. at Sumburgh Head. *Relative Humidity* varied from 91 per cent. at Pembroke and 90 per cent. at Roche's Point to 79 per cent. at Nairn, Shields, Liverpool and in London, and 76 per cent. at Leith.

Rainfall was in the majority of instances above the average,* but, as a general rule, both the excess and the defect were comparatively small. There were a few cases in the west of Scotland and extreme south of England where the excess was from 2 ins. to 2·6 ins. The largest aggregates were 6·1 ins. at Fort William, 5·8 ins. at Laudale, 5·7 ins. at Glencarron, 4·2 ins. at Arlington, Swarraton and Ventnor, and 3·9 ins. at Bognor, Brighton and Valencia. The smallest aggregate was 0·8 in. at Skegness. Falls exceeding an inch in a day occurred on the 1st at Fort William and Laudale, on the 6th at Arlington, on the 20th at Swarraton and Ventnor, on the 23rd at Plymouth, on the 26th at Bognor and Brighton, on the 27th at Ampleforth, Cirencester and Oxford, and on the 31st at Donaghadee and the various stations in and around Dublin. The heaviest falls were 1·36 ins. at Swarraton and 1·39 ins. at Oxford. The number of rainy days ranged from 24 at Valencia and 23 at Scilly to 11 at Foynes and Waterford, and 10 at Deerness, Hillington and Skegness.

Bright Sunshine was above the average* only at Deerness and Stornoway, the latter station, with a total of 219 hours, being the sunniest in the whole country. The defective amounts were generally large, the difference at Geldeston being 81 hours and at Pembroke 83 hours. The percentage of the possible duration ranged from 44 at Guernsey and 43 at Dublin and Stornoway to 23 at Newcastle and 21 at Manchester.

* The averages employed are—*Pressure and Temperature* for the 30 years 1871–1900; *Rainfall* for the 35 years 1866–1900; and *Bright Sunshine* for the 20 years 1881–1900. See Appendix III. "Weekly Weather Report," 1901.