MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT.

MAY 1885.

SECTION I.

General Summary for the Month.

The weather of May was cold, changeable, and showery, falls of snow,sleet, hail, and cold rain being of frequent occurrence, though the individual amounts collected were not large. Pressure was low generally, and its distribution was favourable for winds from a more Northerly point than usual; temperature was from 3° to 6° below the mean, but the extremes recorded were moderate. The wind was chiefly Westerly and North-westerly, with a considerable admixture of Easterly in the north,—but in force they were generally moderate or fresh, and the gales were few in number, except on the extreme north-western coasts. Towards the end of the month an improvement had commenced, pressure and temperature were both increasing, and the clouds were disappearing very generally.

May 1–2.—The distribution of pressure over the United Kingdom during these two days was cyclonic and somewhat complex. High-pressure areas were prevalent both over northern and south-western Europe, the two being separated by a "hollow" which spread eastwards from the Atlantic to the eastern shores of the North Sea. Thus, while South-easterly winds prevailed on our northern and eastern coasts, South-westerly to Westerly breezes were felt in the south, and blew hard at times on the shores of the Bay of Biscay. Temperature was rather low, and so far as England and the east of Scotland are concerned, showers fell generally, separated by bright intervals. There are indications that during this period a well-marked depression travelled in a northerly direction outside our western coasts, but at too great a distance for it to be noticed in Section II., or on Map 2, Plate X.

May 3–6.—This period was transitional. The high-pressure area in the north began to give way and move westwards, while a shallow but well-marked depression (No. XXIII.*) appeared at the mouth of the Channel, and moving eastwards and north-eastwards, reached the coast of Denmark at 8 a.m. on the 5th. The winds over our Islands consequently backed round through East to North-east and North, without much increase of force, and were accompanied by snow, hail, and cold rain, while in France the wind was South-westerly and Westerly. Temperature did not rise above 54° at any of our stations on the 5th and 6th, and the wind, though completely cyclonic in direction, was only moderate in force. Late on the 5th a second minimum reached the mouth of the Bristol Channel, and early on the 6th another appeared near Lorient. These subsequently coalesced, and moving north-eastwards, followed in almost exactly the same track as that just referred to. The positions of these two centres on the 5th, 6th, and 7th are shown in the Daily and Weekly Weather Reports for the period, and their movements from time to time are shown by the arrows marked XXIII. and XXIIIA. on Map 2, Plate X.

May 7–11.—The distribution of pressure during this period was chiefly cyclonic, and the gradients, on the whole, were favourable for North-westerly winds. The depressions referred to in the last paragraph had passed completely away to the north-west of Norway on

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

the 7th, leaving behind them only a hollow over the country; while gradients for Westerly winds were established temporarily over the United Kingdom, with improving but cold weather. On the afternoon of the 8th a new but small depression (No. XXIV.*) began to appear off our north-western coasts. Its movements were very slow, but in its rear the barometer rose so quickly that the system became deeper, so that when its centre reached the south of Norway on the 10th the gradients for North-westerly winds over our Islands and the North Sea were comparatively steep, and the wind became very strong at many of our northern and north-eastern stations. Temperature, after rising to 58° in some parts of England on the 8th, fell again as the wind veered, and showers of cold rain or hail fell in many parts of the kingdom. Thunder occurred at some northern stations on the 10th. A considerable change now took place.

May 12–13 a well-marked anticyclonic area (No. VI., p. 53) advanced over our Islands from the westward, accompanied by fair weather, some fogs, and light breezes. Temperature did not change much over the United Kingdom, though it fell somewhat decidedly over Belgium and France, and the daily maxima remained low for the time of year. On the 13th the system broke into two parts, and while one moved eastwards towards South Germany, the other (lying off our northern coasts) began to move south-westward to the west of Ireland. In the meantime a new depression (No. XXVI.*) came quickly over the southern part of the Bay of Biscay, and passing across the south of France on the 14th, developed into a larger system over Austria and travelled thence in a north-easterly and northerly direction across north Germany and the Baltic to Finland. The wind veered to the Northward again on almost all our coasts as the centre passed over France, and to North-east in the Channel. In force it remained light or moderate with us, but gales of considerable strength were experienced from North and North-west over the Bay of Biscay and west of France, and were repeated in the south and east of France later, and over other parts of the Continent also.

May 14–18.—During this period gradients for Northerly and North-westerly winds remained with us almost continuously, temperature was low, the air raw, cold showers fell in almost all parts of the kingdom, and thunderstorms of great severity were experienced in many places. On the evening of the 16th the cyclonic system (No. XXVII.*) appeared off the north of Scotland, and moving slowly to the south-eastward and southward over the North Sea, caused some Northerly gales on our north and north-east coasts, and strong, squally, Northerly winds over the North Sea generally. The weather was very cold and rough, and it was with this system that the thunderstorms just referred to were experienced. On reaching Holland the whole system broke up, and the high-pressure area lying to the westward of our Islands gave way.

May 19–24.—A period now commenced in which cyclonic systems prevailed continuously, but the type of pressure distribution varied greatly. Several depressions came over us from the Atlantic, and temperature remained low, though the wind varied frequently both in force and direction; rain fell in all parts of the kingdom, and thunderstorms occurred very generally, notably on the 21st and 22nd. The first depression reached our western and north-western districts on the 19th, and was too slight to merit much notice. The second (No. XXVIII.*) advanced on the 20th; it was considerably larger and deeper than its predecessor, but its movements were somewhat remarkable. At 2 p.m. on the 20th its centre was near Dublin; it then moved north-north-eastwards to the neighbourhood of Stirling, after which it travelled north-westwards, and passed out to the Atlantic again across the Hebrides. A subsidiary system (XXVIIIA.), which appeared over our southern counties next morning, took a parallel course, though its track lay much further to the southward and eastward than that just referred to, its centre passing over our south-eastern counties on the 22nd, over the North Sea on the 23rd, and away into the Atlantic off the west of Norway during the following night, leaving a "hollow" between the Norwegian and Scotch coasts on the 24th. This soon broke up, and the distribution of pressure became more simple.

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

May 25–31.—During this, the closing week of the month, the distribution of pressure was more simple than at the earlier part of it. Pressure was, on the whole, highest over France and lowest first to the westward and afterwards to the northward of our Islands. The gradients were consequently favourable for the prevalence of winds from the Southward and Westward, and occasionally became rather steep as some depressions passed along, at a great distance outside our extreme western coasts, in about the direction shown by the arrow marked "A" in Map 2 Plate X. Their effect was at once apparent in the temperature over England, which increased gradually from day to day, so that on the 28th the daily maxima exceeded 70° at several of the inland stations. After this the wind became rather more Westerly, temperature again decreased, and the month closed with light Westerly to North-westerly breezes, cold but fine weather, and a rising barometer, as a new anticyclone was advancing towards us from the westward.