MONTHLY WEATHER REPORT.

MARCH 1884.

SECTION I.

General Summary for the Month.

The weather experienced over the United Kingdom during the month of March varied considerably from time to time. At one period it was cold, at another exceptionally warm, but on the whole the temperature was a little above the average. Pressure was rather high generally, its range was small, and its distribution was favourable for winds from a more Southerly quarter than is usual in March. The gales were few in number and moderate in force; the rainfall was slight over England, but rather heavy in the western and extreme northern districts, and very heavy in the south-west of Ireland; and the amount of cloud and the number of overcast skies were large. The month did not, however, exhibit those great extremes of temperature and wind which are generally supposed to belong to March, and conditions were on the whole favourable for agricultural work.

March 1–2.—The month opened with cold, fair weather over Great Britain, and milder but showery weather in Ireland. Pressure was highest over northern Europe, lowest over the Mediterranean, and to the westward of our islands, the gradients were slight, and the winds light and variable, but chiefly South-easterly at our western stations.

March 3–12.—This was a period of very changeable, showery weather, with occasional thunderstorms, hail, and sleet at intervals, and with temperature somewhat below the average. The winds varied greatly, but were chiefly Southerly and South-easterly over the northern parts of the country, and South-westerly in the south. Several depressions appeared, all of them small, and (though well marked) comparatively shallow. The first of these (No. XIII.) appeared off the north-west coast of Ireland early on the 3rd, and, travelling northwards, passed away from our area during the following night. The second was more clearly defined. Its centre reached the neighbourhood of Land's End early on the 4th, and, travelling across central England, reached the North Sea, between Aberdeen and Skudesnaes, by the 5th, and dispersed during that day (see Cyclonic System No. XIV. on p. 31). A third passed north-eastward outside our extreme west and north-west coasts on the 6th and 7th, at too great a distance for its track to be drawn in Map 2, Plate VII., or for its characteristics to be tabulated on p. 31, and a fourth (No. XV.) on the 9th, numerous shallow subsidiaries being meanwhile observed over our islands. Thus the showers which fell in all parts of the country were numerous, and at times heavy, but there were distinct intervals of bright sunshine which caused vegetation to advance steadily. On the 10th a singular fall of sleet and hail fell, first in the western and then in the northern parts of the country, accompanied by a decided fall of temperature, although the prevalent wind was Southerly to South-westerly. It will be remembered that a similar fall had occurred at the western stations about the middle of February, p. 18, and it does not appear possible at present to account satisfactorily for the phenomenon. After the 12th the irregularities in pressure-distribution began to disappear, the winds became more generally Southerly, and temperature rose decidedly.

March 13–18.—This was one of the finest and warmest periods that has been recorded over England at so early a date for many years past. Pressure was highest over Europe and lowest over the Atlantic, moderate and uniform gradients for Southerly winds being prevalent in all parts of the kingdom. The winds experienced over our islands and their neighbourhood were consequently Southerly in direction, and blew strongly over the western parts of the

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kingdom, accompanied by cloud and rain, but moderately in the east, with fine bright weather. Temperature consequently rose steadily; on the 13th the daily maxima at our inland stations varied from 42° to 47°; on the 14th they varied from about 55° to 60°; on the 15th they had increased to between 64° and 67°; and on the 17th they ranged from 65° to 70°. Large quantities of cirrus cloud were observed on several occasions, moving rather quickly from about S.S.W., and lightning was seen at some of the southern stations. In Ireland the thermometric readings were not nearly so high as those just quoted, the clouds remaining heavy in the west, while the strong winds which prevailed there were drawn from the (relatively) cool surface of the Atlantic instead of from the warmed surfaces of eastern Germany and western France. On the 18th, however, a large depression (No. XVII.) advanced towards our extreme northern coasts, and the weather became less settled, cooler, and cloudy.

March 19–21.—This was a cold, cloudy, and windy period. No sooner had the depression of the 18th passed away to the northward, then a new and deeper one (No. XVIII.) advanced rapidly from the North Atlantic to the north of Scotland. This brought with it South-westerly and Westerly gales, cold rain, sleet and hail, and during its prevalence temperature fell so decidedly that the maximum readings recorded over the inland parts of England on the 20th varied from only 49° to 54°, and during the succeeding night frost occurred on the grass over our northern and eastern counties. As this disturbance travelled away over Norway the barometer rose quickly in the United Kingdom, the wind veered to N.W., temperature again fell, and the eastern portion of an anticyclone showed itself over the Bay of Biscay.

March 22–30.—The weather during this period was anticyclonic. The system first appeared over the Bay of Biscay, and by slowly moving in a north-easterly direction, it covered the whole of our islands, and the northern and western parts of France by the 24th. Another high pressure area was then formed over northern Europe, and the two systems coalesced, so that at 8 a.m. on the 25th the appearance presented by the chart was that of a large ridge of high pressure extending in a south-westerly direction from the north of Scandinavia across the North Sea and the United Kingdom to the Atlantic. With some modifications this distribution of pressure remained with us till the 30th, producing North-easterly and Easterly breezes over nearly the whole of the British Isles and France, but with occasional spells of Southerly wind in Scotland. Temperature was rather low, especially over England and Ireland, the sky cloudy, and, while very little rain fell over Great Britain, a considerable quantity of cold rain, hail, and sleet was reported from Ireland, and the extreme south-west of England. A brilliant display of aurora occurred in the north of Scotland on the evening of the 28th.

On March 31st a new low-pressure system appeared off the west of Ireland, whence the isobars extended eastwards in a somewhat angular form over the Irish Sea and England. (See the Daily and Weekly Reports for this time.) The anticyclonic system then broke up, so far as our islands were concerned, and a new period of mild weather generally set in.