

of the equator on which the sun is situated, and when it ceases at night it commences on the other side. But there are also some places in which rain seldom or never falls, as in the great desert of Africa, and on the arid shore of Peru, between the 15° and 30° of south latitude.

SNOW.

As the atmosphere as well as the earth is subject to a variation of temperature, the moisture which is precipitated by the union of atmospheric masses of unequal temperature and humidity, may fall in a solid as well as in a liquid state. In the winter months, even in England, when a decreased radiation reduces the temperature of the atmosphere below the freezing point, snow is a constantly occurring phenomenon.

When flakes of snow are carefully examined with a microscope, they are found to be composed of a mass of beautiful crystals, having a more or less perfect and regular shape. Dr. Nettis, of Middleburgh, was the first to describe these appearances, which he did in 1740. This observer very carefully delineated some of the figures which the crystallization presented, and of these there is an almost endless variety. But we are chiefly indebted to Captain Scoresby for our information on this interesting subject, who availed himself of his opportunities, during his polar voyages, of not only sketching some of the most remarkable figures, but of measuring the crystals themselves. This gentleman has classified the several modifications of form he observed, but it would be unsuited to the character of this work to detail his results.

The amount of snow falling at any place is of course regulated by the mean temperature, or, in other words, by its latitude, elevation, and position. According to Mr. Scoresby, it snows nine days out of ten during April and the two following months in the polar regions; the heaviest falls always happening when a humid stratum of air from the sea is met by a cold breeze from the surface of the ice. The inhabitants of these inhospitable climes immure themselves in their huts during the most inclement season, and it is then necessary to stop every aperture, so as to prevent the entrance of the cold atmosphere, or the vapour of the confined air would be immediately frozen and fall as snow.