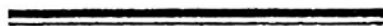


touching the horizon, and inverted coloured arches appeared on the summit of the circles.

Captain Parry several times observed this phenomenon during his polar voyages. At one time he observed the moon to be surrounded with a halo on which three luminous paraselenæ were formed, and on the following night the same appearance was observed, with the addition of stripes of white light, which gave it a resemblance to a cross.

The natural phenomena which result from the action of light are extremely complicated, and their explanation is involved in difficulties. Our ignorance of the agent itself, and the various circumstances under which it is influenced by repellant and attractive forces, prevent us from tracing the cause of many phenomena which are produced by experiment. There is no branch of philosophical knowledge so little studied by those who have not formally devoted themselves to the investigation of the sciences, as the cause and effects of that principle we call light. Surrounded with uncertainties, we fear lest the explanation given in this chapter should be unsatisfactory to the general reader; but we are chiefly anxious that this circumstance may induce a farther investigation of the subject, and not repress an anxiety for a more accurate acquaintance with this interesting, though subtle branch of natural philosophy.



CHAPTER VI.

PHENOMENA DEPENDANT ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTRICITY.

OUR entire ignorance of that agent which we call electricity, may be urged as some excuse for the vague and unsatisfactory manner in which we are compelled to speak of all the natural phenomena that depend upon it as an agent. But, although we are unacquainted with the cause of phenomena universally attributed to electricity, we have ascertained with great precision its habitudes and relations. There are some philosophers who attribute electric appearances to an exceed