

aptitude of a pointed conductor in transferring electricity from a highly electrical atmosphere ; and it is possible that it may, on philosophical principles, be considered as the prognosticator of atmospheric changes, since the agent itself has an evident connexion with many meteorological effects which we at present find some difficulty in explaining.

The phenomenon observed by M. Allamand, in the Canton of Neufchatel, may probably be attributed to the same cause. As this gentleman was walking from Fleurier to Montiers, he was overtaken by a thunder-storm. Having closed his umbrella, lest the electricity should be attracted by its metallic point, he saw that the rim of his hat was surrounded by a broad band of light, which became more intense when he passed his hand over it. This appearance vanished as soon as he came near to some tall trees, which in all probability conducted away the electricity from the highly excited atmosphere.

Humboldt observed the *St. Elmo's light* during one of his voyages, and we are always glad to avail ourselves of his descriptions. "On observing the appearance of the masts, the main-top-gallant mast-head, from the truck for three feet down, was perfectly enveloped in a cold blaze of pale phosphorus-looking light, completely embracing the circumference of the mast, and attended with a fitting or creeping motion, as exemplified experimentally by the application of common phosphorus upon a board. The fore and mizzen top gallant mast-heads exhibited a similar appearance. This curious illumination continued with undiminished intensity for eight or ten minutes, when, becoming gradually fainter and less extensive, it finally disappeared, after a duration of not less than half an hour."

Philosophers know that in many instances the most occult, and apparently the most feeble agents, are productive of the most important, if not the most violent effects. When we rub a piece of sealing-wax with a woollen cloth, and induce in it a property by which it is able to attract to itself any light substance that may be near, it is scarcely possible to imagine that the same agent governs the formation of clouds, and that the terrific storm which shakes earth to its centre is but its effect. Of its nature we may be ignorant, yet it resides in all bodies, and its absence would probably be their destruction. There are, it is true, causes which disturb the