



## BOOK V.

### *THE FRESH WATERS.*

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### SPRINGS AND NATURAL FOUNTAINS.

**W**HEN the moist air, propelled by the wind, wreaths along the flanks of a mountain, it gradually cools, and, at a certain elevation, condenses into cloud or mist. On rising higher it is resolved into rain.

If this rain should fall at a very great height, it congeals, and covers the mountain-summit with a thick veil of snow.

The cooling of the atmosphere in these upper regions—"the difficult air," as Byron finely calls it, "of the iced mountain-top"—is owing to the rarefaction which it necessarily undergoes in the higher ærial strata. A few hundred yards suffice, at this elevation, to effect a lowering of the temperature by one or more degrees. The reader will therefore comprehend how enormous a mass of snow must result from the condensation of the vapours floating in those great volumes of air, loaded with marine exhalations, which the winds carry to the crests of the Alps, the Andes, or the Himalaya. It is for this reason that the mountain-chains are the nursery or cradle of the greatest rivers. The Rhone and the Rhine, for example, owe their origin to the humid south-west wind which passes over the Alps; the basin of the Po is similarly fed by the breezes of the