

south; and the Danube by those of the east, which deposit their aqueous burdens on the great central chain of Europe.

Having thus descended on the heights, the water filtrates through the soil, reappearing at remote points and at a lower level under the form of *Springs*, which pour down into the valleys. At the same time, the annual melting of the snows which crown the soaring peaks with so radiant a diadem abundantly nourish the little rivers that flash and leap along the mountain-sides; so that the winter floods caused by the winter rains are followed by the summer floods arising from the universal thaw. Thus, between the atmosphere and the earth, enormous masses of vapour are in constant circulation, are incessantly falling in snow and rain to reascend continuously in vapour; this everlasting exchange or alternation producing the irrigation (*arrosement*) of the globe—a remarkable phenomenon, and an essential agent of its fertility.

The all-important part played by the Rains in the economy of Nature is finely set forth by Lucretius in the noble verses where he describes the various products of the earth, the fruits, the cereals, and the forest-greenery, springing into existence through the genial showers, by a kind of fecundation in the maternal bosom of the Earth.

“ Postremo pereunt imbres ; ubi eos pater aether
 In gremium matris terrai præcipitavit ?
 At nitidæ surgunt fruges, ramique virescunt
 Arboribus : crescunt ipsæ, fœtuque gravantur.
 Hinc alitur porro nostrum genus atque ferarum,
 Hinc lætas urbes pueris florere videmus,
 Frondiferasque novis avibus canere undique silvas.”

[At length the rains depart:—whither, O say,
 Into the womb of mother earth has Heaven
 Precipitated quick their genial wealth?—
 But see the glowing grain once more appears;
 Once more the boughs assume their leafiness,
 And flourish fair, and droop with heavy fruit.
 Hence does the human race—hence, too, the brutes,
 Derive their nourishment; and hence the towns
 Are busy with the hum of youth, while loud
 The forests echo with the song of birds.]

[Fully to comprehend the mechanism of this beautiful pheno-