

menon, which is of such vital importance to the existence of men and animals, and without whose constant recurrence the earth would speedily become a dreary lifeless wilderness, the reader should bear in mind a few leading principles. 1st, He should remember that an uniform temperature of the atmosphere would be fatal to the production of dew, rain, snow, or hail; because the water absorbed by it in evaporation would incessantly descend in an imperceptible vapour, or, when the air was fully saturated, would cease to be absorbed. 2nd, The atmosphere absorbs and retains much more readily in warm than in cold air. 3rd, The air is warmest when nearest to the earth's surface. Every mountain-climber knows that the higher he ascends, the greater becomes the rarefaction, and, consequently, the coldness of the atmosphere. Now, when from continual evaporation the air is loaded with vapour, if its temperature be suddenly lowered by the influence of a cold current descending from above, or rushing from a higher to a lower latitude, its capacity to retain moisture is diminished, clouds gather, and rain falls. Air condenses as it cools: it resembles a sponge filled with water, and then vigorously compressed, which pours out the moisture its diminished capacity is unable to hold.

Thus simple and thus beautiful is the philosophy of rain. How black were earth without it! How all the beauty of colour would vanish from the landscape! What a constant depression would affect the mental and physical faculties of man, even supposing that under such altered conditions he could exist at all! A glory, a life, and a music would vanish from our world!

Reflecting upon these considerations, the reader will appreciate the philosophy that mingles with the poetry of the following passage:—*

“ He can behold
 Things manifold
 That have not yet been wholly told—
 Have not been wholly sung nor said.
 For his thought, that never stops,
 Follows the water-drops

* [Longfellow, “Miscellaneous Poems:” *Rain in Summer.*]