

We cannot trace very exactly the precise circumstances, in the occurrences of the atmospheric regions, which depend on the influence of the laws of electricity: but we are tolerably certain, from what has been already noticed, that if these laws did not exist, or were very different from what they now are, the action of the clouds and winds, and the course of vegetation, would also be other than it now is.

It is therefore at any rate very probable that electricity has its appointed and important purposes in the economy of the atmosphere. And this being so, we may see a use in the thunder-storm and the stroke of the lightning. These violent events are, with regard to the electricity of the atmosphere, what winds are with regard to heat and moisture. They restore the equilibrium where it has been dissolved, and carry the fluid from places where it is superfluous, to others where it is deficient.

We are so constituted, however, that these crises impress almost every one with a feeling of awe. The deep lowering gloom of the thunder-cloud, the overwhelming burst of the explosion, the flash from which the steadiest eye shrinks, and the irresistible arrow of the lightning which no earthly substance can withstand, speak of something fearful, even independently of the personal danger which they may whisper. They convey, far more than any other appearance does, the idea of a superior and mighty power, manifesting displeasure and threatening punishment. Yet we find that this is not the language which they speak to the physical inquirer: he sees these formidable symptoms only as the means or the consequences of good. What office the thunderbolt and the whirlwind may have in the *moral* world, we cannot here discuss: but certainly *he* must speculate as far beyond the limits of philosophy as of piety, who pretends to have learnt that there their work has more of evil than of good. In the *natural* world, these apparently destructive agents are, like all the other movements