

zones, the clouds appear to be higher in summer than they are in winter. In the temperate zones, Gay Lussac thinks that clouds, in general, are upheld at an average distance from the earth's surface of between 1500 and 2000 yards. Occasionally, however, clouds have a much greater altitude; and the *Cirrus*, a form of cloud to be presently described, has been seen far above the greatest elevation hitherto attained by man.

In some parts of the world, clouds are rarely seen; while in other parts, the sky is seldom cloudless. Such extremes are usually confined to extreme climates, or depend upon local causes. In the temperate zones, from the irregularity of the atmospheric currents, and from the other innumerable circumstances calculated to disturb the equilibrium of the atmosphere, the general character of clouds varies much, even under the same parallel of latitude. Hence all the infinite variety of sunshine, of cloud, and of shower, which more especially distinguish the temperate zones, and our own variable sky in particular; where they exert such constant and commanding influence upon our comfort and wellbeing, as to become almost interwoven with our very existence.

Though clouds are of such endless diversity of *figure* and appearance, they have been classed by Howard under three primary forms, and four modifications. The three primary forms are :