

remind the reader of a few only of the most obvious benefits derived from clouds. The first of these that claims our attention, is, that on the large scale at least, clouds constitute a sort of intermediate state of existence between vapour and water ; by which, sudden depositions of water, and their consequences, are entirely prevented. If all the water separated from the atmosphere fell at once to the earth, in the state of water, we should be constantly liable to deluges and other inconveniences ; the whole of which are obviated, by the present beautiful arrangement. Again, clouds are one great means by which water is transported from seas and oceans, to be deposited far inland, where water otherwise would never reach. Clouds also greatly mitigate the extremes of temperature. By day, they shield vegetation from the scorching influence of the solar heat, and produce all the agreeable vicissitude of shade and sunshine : by night, the earth, wrapt in its mantle of clouds, is enabled to retain that heat which would otherwise radiate into space ; and is thus protected from the opposite influence of the nocturnal cold. These benefits arising from clouds are most felt in countries without the Tropics, which are most liable to extremes of temperature. Indeed, clouds constitute one great means by which, in temperate climates, the extremes of heat and cold are regulated. Lastly, whether