

we contemplate them with respect to their form, their colour, their numerous modifications, or, more than all, their incessant state of change; clouds prove a source of never-failing interest, and may be classed among the most beautiful objects in nature.

Having finished the consideration of the various states of visible vapour; we are now to examine the phenomena of the precipitation of water from the atmosphere in the form of *Snow*, *Sleet*, *Rain*, and *Hail*. We shall first speak

*Of Snow.*—We commence with snow, because it offers the most simple case of the precipitation of water from the atmosphere; snow being nothing more than the frozen visible vapour composing clouds. Hence a flake of snow, examined with a high magnifier, exhibits a beautiful display of minute crystals, often possessing the greatest variety of form.

When the temperature of the atmosphere, down to the earth's surface, is constantly below the freezing point; it is obvious that any moisture separated from the atmosphere must assume the solid form. If the quantity separated be small, the frozen particles of water remaining detached, float in the atmosphere in the form of crystallized spiculæ, and thus give origin to what is called the *frost-smoke*; a phenomenon not unfrequently witnessed in polar latitudes. Even