

If the degree of cold has been very sudden and intense, which is often the case, the icy nucleus, from its being of a temperature far below the freezing point, acquires magnitude as it descends, by condensing on its surface the vapour of the lower regions of the atmosphere. Hence, even under ordinary circumstances, hailstones often become of considerable size, are nearly always more or less rounded, and when broken, are seen to be composed of concentric layers.

From what has been stated it will be readily inferred, that hail is not a product of extreme climates; indeed hail may be said to be peculiar to temperate climates, as it rarely ever occurs beyond the latitude of 60° . Hail is most frequent in spring and in summer, when it is often accompanied by thunder. It seldom hails in winter; and hail during the night is very uncommon. In tropical countries there is little hail in any place that is not more than 2000 feet above the level of the sea: in temperate climates, on the contrary, mountain tops are almost free from hail. Certain countries, especially some parts of France, are very liable to hail storms; and such is at times the fury of these storms that they lay waste whole districts. There are on record many instances of these calamitous visitations; which are usually accompanied by whirlwinds, and by the most appalling