

and would never come to rest if its motion were not destroyed by friction and the resistance of the air.

The atmosphere itself is capable of motion; and when its equilibrium is disturbed, either locally or generally, it produces by impact an effect upon all bodies that are in its path. It not only carries away in its progress the lighter substances with which it comes into contact, but, when greatly agitated, uproots trees, crumbles rocks, and overturns buildings. Man, who subdues and regulates all natural agents by the exercise of those noble properties of mind with which God has blessed him, has applied air in motion as a mechanical force, and compels it to accomplish his wishes, not only in the alleviation of his daily toil, but in facilitating the intercourse between the several sections of the human family; and as though these adaptations were not sufficient to prove the superiority of mind over matter, it is often made to minister to his pleasures, both of mind and of appetite.

If it were necessary to mention any other phenomenon as proving the existence of an atmosphere, allusion might be made to its colour. The vault of heaven, when uncovered by the clouds which sometimes hang as draperies beneath it, has a beautiful azure or blue tinge. This colour cannot of course belong to space, nor is it the result of the influence of those bodies which revolve in it, but is occasioned by the passage of light through the atmosphere. When a small quantity is examined, the colour cannot be detected, because the portion of coloured light transmitted to the eye is too faint to give the sensation of colour; and, for the same reason, a bottle of sea water has a clear transparent appearance, though the deep sea from which it was taken may have a rich green colour. By such facts as these we are made acquainted with the existence of an atmosphere surrounding the earth, and extending to a considerable height above its surface.

The atmosphere is highly important as being the cause of many phenomena we behold, in modifying the influence of others, and in its essential character as the supporter of animal and vegetable life. It has been ascertained by chymists that no other combination of the gases with which we are acquainted would serve the same purpose as that which has been employed, but would be either instantaneously or progressively destructive of life. The atmosphere is also the conductor of sound, gives buoyancy to the clouds, and capa-