

of an aerial mountainous scene ; hill capping hill, lighted up with an ever-varying light. When it is the harbinger of rain, its surface presents a fleecy appearance, and is formed in dense masses in lower strata of the atmosphere than usual. In fair weather, the cumulus has a well-defined rounded surface, and frequently increases or diminishes with the temperature, lasting in one form or the other throughout the whole day. Mr. Howard, speaking of this modification of clouds, says, "independently of the beauty and magnificence it adds to the face of nature, the cumulus serves to screen the earth from the direct rays of the sun ; by its multiplied reflections, to diffuse, and, as it were, to economize the light ; and also to convey the product of evaporation to a distance from the place of its origin. The connexion of the finer round forms, and more pleasing dispositions and colours of these aggregates, with warmth and calmness ; and of every thing that is dark, and abrupt, and shaggy, and blotched, and horrid in them, with cold, and storm, and tempest, may be cited as no mean instance of the perfection of that wisdom and benevolence which formed and sustains them."

THE STRATUS.

The term stratus includes all those creeping mists which, during the night, and particularly in the summer, are seen to rise from low or damp situations. It is spoken of by writers as the lowest of all clouds : there are others, however, which, like itself, rest their lower surface upon the earth. The stratus generally rises after sunset, and vanishes soon after sunrise, being gradually separated from the earth, and ultimately evaporated. This modification has been long known as the harbinger of fair weather, and it is almost invariably followed by a serene and cheerful day.

THE CIRRO-CUMULUS.

The cirrus sometimes loses its fibrous character, and its streaks seem to contract and form themselves into globular or irregular masses, arranging themselves horizontally, and sinking in the atmosphere—this is the cirro-cumulus. It has been supposed by some, that this alteration of form results from the cessation, either from an alteration in its structure or in the condition of the air, of its office as the electrical conductor of the atmosphere. The cirro-cumulus is frequently