

table to this cause. But whether this opinion, which in the present state of our knowledge can neither be proved nor disproved, is founded in truth or not, we do know that clouds are frequently the reservoirs of electricity of great intensity. In August, 1772, a bright cloud was observed covering a mountain in Cheribon, in the Island of Java, and loud sounds, resembling the discharge of artillery, were heard from it. A part of this cloud detached itself from the mass, and covering over a circumference of about three leagues, was seen to rise and fall, as though it were perpetually under the influence of two opposing forces, discharging large globes of fire, which illuminated the whole country. Its effects were most terrible for seven leagues round; houses and plantations were destroyed, and upward of two thousand persons were killed. There are, however, some cases in which electricity from the earth strikes the cloud. A very remarkable instance of this is mentioned by Brydone, in which the electric action of the earth melted part of the tires of a cart's wheels.

Other modifications of cloud are sometimes charged with electricity, but the nimbus is always in an electrified condition, although it is not always placed in those circumstances which cause the electric agent to assume that free state in which its presence is displayed to the senses. The nimbus is always present during a thunder-storm; and its dark and apparently compact structure seems to be rent by the violent expanding force of the devastating agent, as it darts from cloud to cloud, or cleaves its way to the earth. The form of the rain-cloud is modified by the intensity of its accumulated electricity, but in what degree has not been determined.

There are appearances sometimes assumed by clouds which cannot be assigned to any of the classes which have been described; but these are transient, and quickly take some of the modifications we have explained. Many other particulars have been ascertained concerning the constitution and structure of clouds, their appearances, position, and results, which we cannot now attempt to enumerate.

RAIN.

The vapour carried into the atmosphere by the process of evaporation is frequently brought to the earth again as rain.