

those instances where the dimensions of the conductor are too small to convey the accumulated fluid. In one or two instances in which houses have been struck by lightning, the electricity has been conducted away by the bell-wires, for metals are good conductors ; but, on account of the smallness of the wires compared with the intensity of the agent, they have been fused in the act of transference. This choice of conductors is also proved by a fact that must be well known to foresters, that although the oak is frequently struck by lightning, the beech is seldom scathed, and perhaps never, when the royal tree is near to the direction in which the electricity is moving. Human life is frequently destroyed by lightning ; buildings are inflamed, rocks are fissured, and the forest-tree is dismembered or cleft ; but its agency is still more terrible on the broad bosom of the ocean, where the majestic vessel is alone exposed to its fury. We are not generally acquainted with the frequency of those disasters at sea which result from the electric agent, for but few are recorded in the pages of our philosophical journals. One or two instances, however, may be cited. It is stated, by an anonymous writer in the *Philosophical Journal*, that at Port Mahon, on board of a seventy-four gun ship, he saw fifteen men on the bowsprit and jib-boom struck by a flash of lightning, some of them being killed, and others dreadfully scorched. The same writer states that, in 1811, the Kent, a seventy gun ship, then off Toulon, was struck with lightning ; the main and mizzen masts were shattered from the trunk downward, and several of the men then on the yards were severely injured.

If the phenomenon of lightning were free from danger, and the mind from an almost instinctive dread of its effects, every lover of the sublime in nature might be allowed to feel some anxiety to behold a thunder-storm at sea. The mind of man is not insensible to the evidence of a Supreme Power as displayed in nature ; but while, in some instances, it dwells upon the consideration of the benign and salutary influence of material creation, it cannot, at other times, escape the feeling that an omniscient and omnipotent Spirit, capable of anger as well as complacency, exercises control over all. The earthquake and volcano, the hurricane and the tempest, might be sufficient to prove this ; but no terrestrial phenomenon can impress the mind with the same reverential awe and consciousness of dependance as a thunder-storm at sea. But