

amount of air contained in the tube. There is, however, some connexion between the magnetic poles of the earth and atmospheric electricity, but the nature of their influence on each other is not at present known. Dr. Faraday considers it probable that the aurora is a luminous representation of electricity flowing from the equator to the poles for the restoration of electric equilibrium. But it is not as yet possible to say with certainty whether it is an occasional discharge, or a luminous representation of a constant stream of electricity. That it is a phenomenon occurring in a very attenuated atmosphere, there can be no doubt, and that it is in some way connected with its temperature. In Siberia, one of the coldest inhabited countries, the aurora is so brilliant as to sometimes excite the fears of those who are accustomed to view it from night to night; and it is well known that the electrical condition of the atmosphere is more decided in winter than in summer; a circumstance that tends to support the opinion, that the aurora is in some way connected with the temperature of the atmospheric strata in which it is produced.

ST. ELMO'S LIGHT.

St. Elmo's light is a luminous meteor that frequently settles upon the mast-head of vessels, and is probably of electric origin, though it is never known to produce any of those disastrous effects which so often attend lightning. Sometimes it is confined to the mast-head, while at other times it gradually descends the mast to the deck itself. It was formerly supposed by mariners to be a visible representation of a spirit they call St. Elmo, who is the tutelar deity of those who traverse the mighty deep, and has a prophetic power. When it is confined to the topmast, it is a proof, in their opinion, that although bad weather may be present, yet it will not continue, and cannot injure the vessel. But when it descends the mast, it prognosticates a gale of wind, or a disaster, which will be more or less violent in proportion to the depth of its descent. Falconer has described this phenomenon in his *Shipwreck* :—

“High on the masts, with pale and livid rays,
Amid the gloom, portentous meteors blaze.”

This appearance may be readily explained upon the known