The first drop of water, which fell upon the still heated terrestrial sphere, marked a new period in its evolution—a period the mechanical and chemical effects of which it is important to analyse. The contact of the condensed water with the consolidated surface of the globe opens up a series of modifications of which science may undertake the examination with a degree of confidence, or at least with more positive elements of appreciation than any we possess for the period of chaos; some of the features of which we have attempted to represent, leaving of necessity much to the imagination, and for the reader to interpret after his own fashion.

The first water which fell, in the liquid state, upon the slightly cooled surface of the earth would be rapidly converted into steam by the elevation of its temperature. Thus, rendered much lighter than the surrounding atmosphere, these vapours would rise to the utmost limits of the atmosphere, where they would become condensed afresh, in consequence of their radiation towards the glacial regions of space; condensing again, they would re-descend to the earth in a liquid state, to re-ascend as vapour and fall in a state of condensation. But all these changes, in the physical condition of the water, could only be maintained by withdrawing a very considerable amount of heat from the surface of the globe, whose cooling would be greatly hastened by these continual alternations of heat and cold; its heat would thus become gradually dissipated and lost in the regions of celestial space.

This phenomenon extending itself by degrees to the whole mass of watery vapour existing in the atmosphere, the waters covered the earth in increasing quantities; and as the conversion of all liquids into vapour is provocative of a notable disengagement of electricity, a vast quantity of electric fluid necessarily resulted from the conversion of such large masses of water into vapour. Bursts of thunder and bright flashes of lightning were the necessary accompaniments of this extraordinary struggle of the elements—a state of things which M. Maurando has attempted to represent on the opposite page (PLATE VII.).

How long did this struggle for supremacy between fire and water, with the incessant noise of thunder, continue? All that can be said in reply is, that a time came when water was triumphant. After having covered vast areas on the surface of the earth, it finally occupied and entirely covered the whole surface; for there is good reason to believe that at a certain epoch, at the commencement, so to speak, of its evolution, the earth was covered by water over its whole extent. The ocean was universal. From this moment our globe