

average condition belonging to each place. All these oscillations are limited and transient; the storm spends its fury, the inundation passes off, the sky clears, the calmer course of nature succeeds. In the forces which produce this derangement, there is a provision for making it short and moderate. The oscillation stops of itself, like the rolling of a ship, when no longer impelled by the wind. Now, why should this be so? Why should the oscillations, produced by the conflict of so many laws, seemingly quite unconnected with each other, be of this converging and subsiding character? Would it be so under all arrangements? Is it a matter of mechanical necessity that disturbance must end in the restoration of the medium condition? By no means. There may be an utter subversion of the equilibrium. The ship may roll too far, and may *capsize*. The oscillations may go on, becoming larger and larger, till all trace of the original condition is lost; till new forces of inequality and disturbance are brought into play; and disorder and irregularity may succeed, without apparent limit or check in its own nature, like the spread of a conflagration in a city. This is a possibility in any combination of mechanical forces; why does it not happen in the one now before us? By what good fortune are the powers of heat, of water, of steam, of air, the effects of the earth's annual and diurnal motions, and probably other causes, so adjusted, that through all their struggles the elemental world goes on, upon the whole, so quietly and steadily? Why is the whole fabric of the weather never utterly deranged, its balance lost irrecoverably? Why is there not an eternal conflict, such as the poets imagine to take place in their chaos?

“For Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry, four champions fierce,
Strive here for mastery, and to battle bring
Their embryon atoms:—

to whom these most adhere,

He rules *a moment*: Chaos umpire sits,
And by decision more embroils the fray.”—*Par. Lost*. b. ii.