

cribed. These properties, if borne in mind by the reader, will enable him to understand what follows.

When water is exposed to the air in an open vessel, the molecules of its uppermost or superficial stratum being released from the influence of those below them, have a natural tendency to assume that degree of polarity which is appropriate to their temperature. Hence, after acquiring the latent heat necessary to produce this polarity, either at the expense of a portion of their own sensible heat, or of that of the atmosphere; the superficial molecules of water become self-repulsive, and fly off into space in the form of vapour. If the space over the water be circumscribed and be a vacuum; the molecules fly off with such rapidity as instantaneously to fill it. But, if the space be occupied by air, or be of indefinite magnitude; the molecules fly off more slowly, so as gradually to diffuse themselves through the whole space; quite on the same principle, and in the same manner, that one gaseous body is diffused through another.

Such, in few words, may be deemed a simple statement of what evaporation is. We shall next proceed to enquire into the nature and operation of the means by which evaporation not only takes place, but is limited within certain boundaries.

In a former chapter, we remarked, that the