

twilight; nay even the light of day itself. "Were it not," says Sir J. Herschel, "for the reflecting and scattering power of the atmosphere, no objects would be visible to us out of direct sunshine, every shadow of a passing cloud would be pitchy darkness; the stars would be visible all day, and every apartment into which the sun had not direct admission would be involved in nocturnal obscurity." Again, to use the words of the same author, in speaking of twilight,— "After the sun and moon are set, the influence of the atmosphere still continues to send us a portion of their light; not indeed by direct transmission, but by reflection upon the vapours and minute solid particles which float in it, and perhaps the actual material atoms of the air itself."\* Such are the beautiful phenomena, and the important results, of the action of the vapour of the atmosphere on light. It remains to mention a few others, of a similar character, and produced by the same causes; but of less frequent occurrence, or of less importance in the economy of nature.

The first of these minor phenomena which we shall notice is the *Mirage*; a phenomenon depending partly on the vapour of the atmosphere, and partly on the intermixture of strata of air of different temperatures and densities. The mirage is not unfrequent in level countries,

\* Treatise on Astronomy, p. 33.