

is the condensation and suspension of the clouds in that elevated region where they are formed and supported. Beyond this middle region, where the cold and condensation commence, the vapors rise, but cease to be visible, except when a part of a cold stratum seems to be pushed back toward the surface of the earth, and when the heat escaping from the earth being for some time extinguished by rains, the vapours then collect and thicken around us in the form of mists and fogs. Without these circumstances, the vapours never become visible till they arrive at that region where the cold condenses them into clouds, and stops their further ascension: Their gravity, which augments in proportion as they become more dense, fixes them in an equipoise which they cannot surmount. We perceive that the clouds are generally higher in summer, and still higher in warm climates. It is in this season and in these climates that the stratum formed by evaporation from the earth rises highest. On the contrary, in the frozen regions near the pole, where the evaporation produced by the heat of the globe is much less, the stratum of dense air seems to touch the surface, and there to retain the clouds, which never rise higher, but surround these gloomy regions with perpetual fogs.

III.

Of some Winds which have a regular Variation.

THERE are certain climates and particular countries where the winds vary regularly; some at the end of six months, others in a few weeks, others from morning to night, and from night to morning. In vol. i. p. 388. I remarked, That, at St. Domingo, there are two different winds which rise regularly every day; the one, which is from the sea, comes from the east, and begins at 10 o'clock before noon; the other, which is a land-wind, rises at six or seven in the evening, and continues the whole night. M. Fresnaye writes me, that my information has not been exact. 'The two regular winds,' he remarks, 'which blow at St. Domingo, are both from the sea, and blow, the one in the morning from the east, and the other in the evening from the west, which is only the same wind returned. It is evidently occasioned by the sun; for, every man perceives, that between one and two o'clock after noon, a transient gust arises. When the sun declines, by rarefying the air on the west, it drives to the east the clouds which the morning wind had confined toward the opposite quarter.

' quarter. These returned clouds, from April or
' May till toward autumn, produce in the district
' of Port-au-Prince the regular rains which con-
' stantly proceed from the east. There is not a
' single inhabitant who does not predict the
' evening rain between six and nine o'clock,
' when according to their mode of expression,
' *the broken cloud has been sent back.* The west
' wind continues not during the whole night.
' It falls regularly toward the evening, and,
' when it ceases, the clouds pushed from the east
' are enabled to fall in the form of rain, as soon
' as their weight exceeds that of an equal column
' of air. The wind which prevails in the night
' is a land wind, which proceeds neither from
' the east nor the west, but follows the projec-
' tions of the coast. At Port-au-Prince, the
' south wind, because it traverses the course of
' the river, is intolerably cold during the months
' of January and February *.

* Note communicated to M. de Buffon, by M. Fresnaye, one
of the councillors of St. Domingo, dated March 10, 1777.

IV.

*Of Lavanges, or great Masses of Snow and Ice
rolling down from high Mountains.*

IN high mountains, there are winds produced
by accidental causes, and particularly by *la-
vanges* *. In the environs of the Alpine glaciers,
several species of *lavanges* are distinguishable;
some of them are called *windy lavanges*, because
they produce a great wind. They are formed
when a new fall of snow has been put in motion,
either from melting below by the interior heat
of the earth, or by the agitation of the air. The
snow then forms itself into balls, and in rolling
accumulates, falls in vast masses into the valleys,
and produces a great agitation in the air;
because the snow runs with rapidity, and in
immense volumes, and the winds occasioned by
the motion of these masses are so impetuous, that
they overturn every thing, even the largest pines,
that oppose their passage. These *lavanges* cover
the whole territory over which they extend with
a very fine snow; and this powdered snow
rises in the air at the caprice of the wind, i. e.
without any fixed direction, which is extremely

* I know no single English word expressive of this idea, and
therefore retain the French term.

dangerous