

A FRAGMENT of cirrus, composed of minute snow-crystals, floating ten miles high, was blown across the sea and, after crossing the English coast, began to sink until it entered a lower current; here, feeling the influence of a warmer atmosphere, it blushed a faint pink in the dawn, and began to melt away. A small cumulus followed, forming rapidly out of morning mist, and swallowed it up. As the journey across England continued, this cirro-cumulus broke and collapsed into a system of small round masses, not unlike a flock of sheep.

Another cirrus, in the form of a lock of hair, also crossed the sea and settling down in the atmosphere, lost beauty and polluted its whiteness by entering a stratus which had formed the previous night out of vapour arising from London, and betrayed its origin by the presence of smoke, soot, and particles of dust which produced a density sufficient to darken the country where it passed. But the spiritual influence of the cirrus made itself felt upon the dull body of stratus until, as the cirro-stratus drifted in a westerly direction, it became so fantastic that old folk shook their heads at it; one hour resembling a giant, the next a group of warriors, the next a shoal of fish; and by the time it reached Somerset some local Hamlet and Polonius might have argued as to whether it was more like a camel or a whale.

As the day drew to a close these two groups met, touched, and became a blend of cirro-cumulo-stratus or, in a word, the nimbus; to which men once prayed, and from which dreamers supposed the hand of God gave out the law, and His voice had thundered in their ears. Swept along by the wind, rubbing against hill-tops and trees, it became surcharged with electricity