Ruthven, earl of Gowry ; and, though she had but little fortune, maintained her with a grandeur anſwerable to her birth. He himself was generally richly dressed ; his coach­es and equipage were magnificent, and his retinue was nu­merous ; his table was elegant, and plentifully furniſhed ; and he often entertained his guests after dinner with a con­cert performed by the best Engliſh musicians of London. In ſhort, his house was ſo frequented by persons of the greatest quality of both ſexes, that his apartments rather resembled the court of a prince than the lodgings of a painter. Notwithstanding this expence, he amassed great wealth; when a chemist had the art to insonuate himſelf into his esteem, and inſpired him with a desire of converting cop­per into gold : but the ſecret had no other effect, than ma­king him convert his gold into smoke. Rubens being in­formed of it, wrote to his disciple : he acknowledged his er­ror, and corrected it. At length Vandyck being at an early age subject to the gout, it undermined him by degrees, and carried him to the grave in the year 1641, at the age of 42. He was buried in St Paul’s ; and left to his heirs a considerable estate, which ſome have made to amount to 40,000l. sterling.

VANE, a thin slip of bunting hung to the mast-head, or ſome other conspicuous place in the ſhip, to ſhow the direc­tion of the wind. It is commonly sewed upon a wooden frame called the stoc*k,* which contains two holes whereby to slip over the spindle, upon which it turns about as the wind changes.

VANILLA, or Vanillo See Epidendrum.

VAPOUR, in philoſophy, the particles of bodies rarefied by heat, and thus rendered ſpecifically lighter than the atmosphere, in which they rise to a considerable height. See Evaporation, Damp, Gas, &c.

Many kinds of vapour are unfriendly to animal life, but the most noxious are thoſe which ariſe from metallic substances. In the ſmelting and refining of lead, a white va­pour arises, which, falling upon the graſs in the neighbour­hood, imparts a poiſonous quality to it, ſo that the cattle which feed there will die ; and in like manner stagnant wa­ters impregnated with this vapour will kill fish. In ſome places the earth exhales vapours of a very noxious quality ; ſuch as the Grotto del Cani, and other places in Italy, where a mephitic vapour constantly hovers overs the ſurface of the ground, proving instantly fatal to ſuch animals as are immersed in it. In ſome parts of the world there have been inſtances of people killed, and almost torn to pieces, by a va­pour ſuddenly bursting out of the earth under their feet.

Of the aqueous vapour raiſed from the earth by the sun’s heat are formed the clouds; but though theſe are commonly at no great distance from the earth, we cannot from thence determine the height to which the vapours aſcend. Indeed, considering the great propensity of water, and even quick- ſilver, to evaporate in the most perfect vacuum we can make, it is by no means probable that any limit can be fixed for this ascent. See Weather.

Va*pours, noxious,* method of dissipating. The following ingenious method of dissipating the noxious vapours com­monly found in wells and other subterraneous places, is rela­ted in the Tranſ. Philadel. by Mr Robinſon of Philadelphia the inventor. “ After various unſucceſsful trials (says he), I was led to consider how I could convey a large quantity of freſh air from the top to the bottom of the well, ſupposing that the soul would necessarily give way to the pure air. With this view I procured a pair of ſmith’s bellows, fixed in a wooden frame, ſo as to work in the same manner as at the forge. This apparatus being placed at the edge of the well, one end of a leathern tube (the hoſe of a fire-engine) was closely adapted to the noſe of the bellows, and the other end was thrown into the well, reaching within one foot of the bottom. At this time the well was so infected, that a candle would not burn at a ſhort distance from the top; but, after blowing with my bellows only half an hour, the candle burned bright at the bottom ; then, without farther difficulty, I proceeded in the work, and finished my well. Wells are often made; in a very slight manner, owing to the difficulty of working in them, and there have been ſeveral fatal instances of the danger attending the workmen ; but, by the above method, there is neither difficulty nor danger in com­pleting the work with the utmost ſolidity. It is obvious, that in cleansing vaults, and working in any other ſubterraneous place, ſubject to damps as they are called, the same method must be attended with the same beneficial effect.”

Vapours, in medicine, a diſeaſe properly called *hyps,* or the *hypochondriacal diſeaſe;* and in men particularly, the *spleen.* See Medicine, n⁰ 276 and 321.

Vapour*-Bath,* in chemistry, a term applied to a chemist’s bath or heat, wherein a body is placed ſo as to receive the fumes of boiling water. It consists of two vessels, diſposed over one another in ſuch manner as that the vapour raiſed from the water contained in the lower heats the matter incloſed in the upper. It is very commodious for the distilling of odo­riferous waters, and the drawing of ſpirit of wine.

We alſo use the term *vapour-bath,* when a sick perſon is made to receive the vapours arising from ſome liquid matter placed over a fire. Many contrivances have been propoſed for this purpoſe ; and their expediency and utility are best known to those who are converſant in this busineſs. A late writer has suggested a new construction of vapour baths ; and the whole apparatus is reduced to a tin boiler, tin pipes wrapped in flannel, and a deal box with a cotton cover, for the reception of the body and circulation of the vapour.

VARI, in medicine, little, hard, and ruddy tumors, which frequently infest the faces of young perſons of a hot temperament of body.

VARIATION *of the Compaſs,* is the deviation of the magnetic or mariner’s needle from the meridian or true north and ſouth line. On the continent it is called the *declination* of the magnetic needle ; and this is a better term, for reaſons which will appear by and by.

Our readers know, that the needle of a mariner’s com­paſs is a ſmall magnet, exactly poiſed on its middle, and turning freely in a horizontal direction on a sharp point, ſo that it always arranges itself in the plane of the magnetic action. We need not add any thing on this head to what has been delivered in the articles Compass and *Azimuth Compass.*

About the time that the polarity of the magnet was first obſerved in Europe, whether originally, or as imported from China, the magnetic direction, both in Europe and in China, was nearly in the plane of the meridian. It was therefore an inestimable present to the mariner, giving him a ſure direction in his course through the pathleſs ocean. But by the time that the European navigators had engaged in their adventurous voyages to far distant shores, the devi­ation of the compaſs needle from the meridian was very ſensible even in Europe ; and it is somewhat ſurprising that the Dutch and Portugueſe navigators did not observe it on their own coasts. The ſon of Columbus positively says, that it was obſerved by his father in his first voyage to America, and made his companions ſo anxious left they ſhould not find the way back again to their own country, that they mutinied and refuſed to proceed. It is ſurprifing that any ſhould doubt of its being known to this celebrated na­vigator, because he even endeavours to account for it by ſuppofing the needle always to point to a fixed point of the heavens, different from the pole of the world, which he calls