

South of the Great Bank of Newfoundland it encounters the cold currents that descend from the Arctic Pole by Baffin's Bay and the Greenland Sea ; then a portion of these waters ascends towards the pole, skirting the western coast of Greenland. To the conflict of the polar and the equatorial waters is attributed the formation of the Newfoundland bank, both having incessantly deposited at this point the débris which they carry—mineral substances, and dead animal organisms—so that Newfoundland, to adopt the expressive phrase of Michelet, is nothing more than “a vast ossuary.”]

The difference of temperature between the Gulf Stream and the waters which it traverses must inevitably produce the most terrible

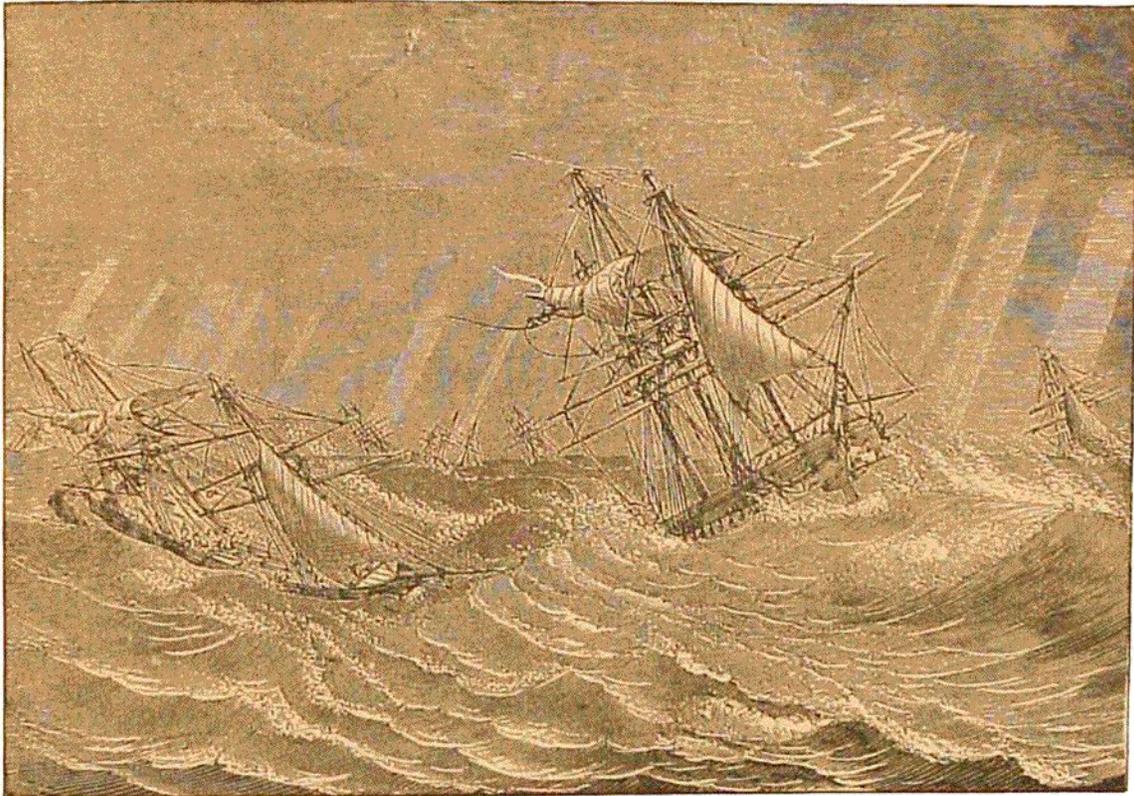


FIG. 214.—HURRICANE IN THE WEST INDIES, IN 1780.

tempests and cyclonic storms. Modern discoveries, which have so clearly demonstrated the route of this grand warm river across the ocean's liquid plain, have enabled the mariner to shorten in a remarkable degree his westward voyages, and to avoid many of the dangers which formerly threatened and annihilated the labouring ships.

In 1780 a frightful hurricane devastated the West Indies, and caused the death of nearly 20,000 persons. Ocean forsook its bed, and inundated the towns ; the bark of trees, mingled with human limbs, whirled round and round in the air. The fatally numerous catastrophes