

IV. *Quelques recherches sur l'Arc Voltaïque, et sur l'influence qu'exerce le Magnétisme soit sur cet arc soit sur les corps qui transmettent les Courants Electriques Discontinus.*

*Researches on the Voltaic Arc, and on the influence which Magnetism exerts both on this Arc and on bodies transmitting interrupted Electric Currents. By M. AUGUSTE DE LA RIVE, Professor in the Academy of Geneva, Foreign Member of the Royal Society, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences at Paris, &c. &c.*

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THE luminous voltaic arc occurring between two conducting bodies, each communicating with one of the poles of the pile, is not merely one of the most brilliant phenomena in physics, but, from the numerous aspects under which it may be regarded, it is also one of the most important.

As a source of light, this phenomenon, when exhibited in a vacuum, enables us to examine what influence this particular origin of the light employed may have in various optical experiments. Compared with the solar light, the light of the voltaic arc presents some curious differences and also resemblances. If, on the one hand, we find in it the seven coloured rays of the spectrum, on the other the black streaks are replaced by brilliant ones, and these are differently interspaced. In this field of inquiry, much, or rather all, yet remains to be investigated.

As a source of heat, the voltaic arc enables us to study the fusion and solidification of even the most refractory bodies *in vacuo*, and consequently under circumstances exempting them from oxidizing action and other chemical influences, which usually result from the application of a high temperature in atmospheric air. It likewise allows us to determine the effects produced upon bodies at a high temperature, by various gases or vapours, distinct from those which enter into the composition of atmospheric air, and at different degrees of density.

As an electro-chemical power, the voltaic arc may be applied so as to submit to the electrolyzing action of the electric current gaseous media, which, from some experiments already made, appear capable of decomposition by this process.

As a mechanical power, the voltaic arc, by bringing bodies into a state of minute division, and impressing upon them, in this state, a tendency to motion, places them in a favourable condition for the study of their molecular constitution, and of the relations which connect this constitution with electricity and magnetism. The struggle that takes place between cohesion and the expansive force of the electric

current, the reduction of matter to the molecular state, and the form and nature of the deposits resulting therefrom, are so many phenomena capable of throwing light on the obscure subject of molecular physics.

The few preceding remarks suffice to give some idea of the extent of an investigation embracing the whole range of experimental research on the voltaic arc under its various aspects, which I am far from pretending to have attempted. I shall confine myself at present to a few details, and especially to such as exhibit the action of magnetism on the voltaic arc, and on those bodies which transmit interrupted currents. I shall begin by describing some particular phenomena which I observed during my study of the voltaic arc under various circumstances, while employing different substances as electrodes, both in the air and in a vacuum; I shall then proceed to examine the action of a powerful electro-magnet on this voltaic arc, and I shall conclude by describing some remarkable experiments also illustrating the influence of magnetism on conducting bodies, of whatever nature, traversed by interrupted currents.

### § 1. *Some Phenomena concerning the Voltaic Arc.*

DAVY was the first who produced the phenomenon of the voltaic arc with two points of charcoal. More recently, MESSRS. GROVE\* and DANIELL† employed with success the points of different metals, and arrived at interesting results: I also published some experiments I made on the voltaic arc‡ in 1841. Subsequently, MM. FIZEAU and FOUCAULT observed some remarkable facts of the same kind on the occasion of an investigation into the intensity of the light emitted by charcoal in the experiment of DAVY §. The researches made up to the present time, have already led to many results, of which I shall consider only the most important.

1. That the voltaic arc may be produced, a pile of greater tension is required than that which is necessary for the ordinary calorific and electro-chemical phenomena. The necessity of this condition proves the great resistance presented to the passage of the electric current by the minutely divided matter, whatever it may be, which connects the two poles.

2. The luminous arc cannot exist, unless contact be previously made between the electrodes, and unless these, or at least one of them, be terminated at the point of contact by points fine enough to produce in them an increase of temperature. When this increased temperature is once produced, we may, by separating the electrodes gradually and with precaution from each other, obtain the luminous arc, the length of which will depend on the intensity of the pile. DANIELL discovered the important fact, which was confirmed by M. VAN BREDA in a very recent investigation inserted in the *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie*, that without contact having taken place, the luminous arc may be produced between two electrodes placed very near together, by causing the discharge of a Leyden jar to pass between them: this is owing to the

\* *Bibl. Univ.* June 1840, i. 27. p. 387.

† *Arch. de l'Elect.* tom. i. p. 262.

‡ *Arch. de l'Elect.* tom. i. p. 462.

§ *Ibid.* tom. iv. p. 311.

discharge being always attended by the transference of highly diffused matter, which closes the circuit during the instant of time necessary for the formation of the arc.

3. The enormous elevation of temperature which accompanies the production of the luminous arc, is also manifested in the electrodes, especially in the positive ones, which become much more strongly heated than the negative.

4. Matter is thus transported from the positive electrode to the negative, a fact which may be verified with electrodes of all kinds, but particularly with those of charcoal.

5. The various phenomena presented by the voltaic arc, are modified to a greater or less extent by the nature of the electrodes and by that of the surrounding medium. Thus Mr. GROVE adduces facts from which it appears that the presence of oxygen is necessary in most cases to produce a very luminous and brilliant arc. It results also from his experiments, as well as those of other philosophers, that when two different substances are made use of for the electrodes, it is not a matter of indifference which of the two is placed at the positive pole.

I now proceed to my own researches. I commenced by studying the production of a luminous arc between a plate and a point of the same material in air, and *in vacuo*. By means of a micrometer screw I was able to make the point recede from the plate very gradually, and judge of their mutual distance with great precision. The limit of distance beyond which the luminous arc ceases to appear, is constant for the same plate and the same point: when, however, the plate communicates with the positive pole, it is in general double that which it is when the point communicates with the same pole. But in proportion as the strength of the pile is greater, the difference is so much the smaller.

With respect to the absolute amount of this distance, it is very variable, depending on the strength of the pile, on the nature and molecular state of the electrodes, and on the time occupied in the experiment. Thus, with a GROVE battery composed of fifty pairs of plates sixteen square inches in surface, it is two or three times greater than with a pile of seventy elements of two or three square inches. With metals easily fused or oxidized, as zinc and iron, it is much greater than with platinum or silver. The duration of the phenomenon influences the result, inasmuch as the high temperature of the electrodes allows them to be drawn asunder to a greater distance without breaking the arc. The same effect may be produced by heating them artificially, by means of a spirit-lamp. It is evident from what I have said that the length of the luminous arc has a relation to the greater or less facility which the substances composing the electrodes possess of being segregated, a facility which may depend upon their temperature diminishing their cohesion, upon their tendency to oxidize (which produces the same effect), upon their molecular state, and lastly upon their peculiar nature. Carbon derives from its molecular constitution, which renders it so friable, the property of being one of the substances which produces the longest luminous arc.

The deposits of the transported matter, form upon the plate, when it is negative and the point positive, a species of very regular ring, the centre of which is the projection of the point upon the plate. This takes place equally, whether the plate be vertical or horizontal, plainly indicating a determinate direction in the transfer of the substance from the positive to the negative electrode; in the air and with metallic electrodes, the deposits always consist of the oxidized dust of the metal, of which the positive electrode is composed.

I shall here enter into some details. A plate and a point of platinum have been used as electrodes in a vacuum, in air and in hydrogen. In a vacuum with a GROVE battery of fifty pairs of plates, which had previously been used, I had only a very feeble effect, and particularly when the plate served as the positive electrode. The point was hardly removed a millimetre\* from the plate when the arc broke; to re-establish it, it became necessary to renew the contact between the point and the plate, by touching another point of the plate, the first point which was touched appearing to have undergone such a modification as to prevent the re-formation of the arc. The same effect is produced when the experiments are made in the air, but it ceases when the power of the battery is increased: this is probably due to an augmentation of cohesion consequent on the increase of temperature in that part of the plate which acts as the positive electrode. Besides, when the experiment is made in air, the voltaic arc is more marked and of greater length than when it is made *in vacuo*, at least if the battery be weak; for when the battery is powerful, composed, for example, of fifty pairs of plates freshly charged, it appeared to me that the contrary obtained. I did not, however, perceive any great difference; but the vacuum in which I experimented was far from being perfect; it was that of a pneumatic pump, enclosing therefore highly rarefied air.

In the latter case, that is to say, with the pile composed of fifty pairs strongly charged, and in highly rarefied air, a bluish spot, perfectly circular and presenting the appearance of a coloured ring of NOBILI, was formed on the plate of platinum when it served as the positive electrode. The same spot appeared in atmospheric air, but its diameter was one-half less, and its colours much less vivid. In hydrogen, no coloured spot was formed; its formation is therefore evidently the result of the oxidation of the platinum at a high temperature when acting as a positive electrode in the ordinary atmosphere, and still more so, perhaps, in rarefied air†. When the same plate of platinum was made use of as a negative electrode, the point being positive, it became covered with a white circular spot, formed of a vast number

\* 1 millimetre = 0.03937 inch.—TRANS.

† This effect may possibly have been owing to the action of the oxygen brought by the voltaic current into that particular state which SCHÖNBEIN first described under the name of *ozone*. Indeed, in this state the oxygen may attack those metals which are supposed to be inoxidizable; and M. MARIGNAC and I have shown that this may be effected by causing a succession of electric discharges to pass through the oxygen, even when very dry, with which the phenomenon of the voltaic arc has a great resemblance.

of minute grains of platinum, which, having been raised to a high temperature, remained adhering to the surface. The white spot, like the blue one, was much larger in rarefied air than in a vacuum. If the experiment be prolonged for a minute or two when the plate is negative, the rod of platinum terminating in a point, which is positive, soon becomes highly incandescent; its end is fused and falls on the plate in the form of a perfectly spherical globule. When the plate is positive and the point negative, the latter is less heated, and does not become fused; but the plate, unless it be very thick, is liable to be perforated: besides, as may easily be imagined, the phenomenon lasts much longer in the latter case. The light is less brilliant, but it is accompanied by a reflexion of a superb blue, which may be seen when the experiment is made in the interior of a bell, whether the air be rarefied or not. This blue reflexion is observed on the side of the bell, and is to be seen whatever may be the nature of the electrodes, or the colour of the light to which these give rise in the centre of the bell; only when this central light is very brilliant, it becomes slightly paler by the effect of contrast.

I substituted for the platinum point a point of coke, but the plate of platinum remained; this being positive and the point negative, I obtained a luminous arc more than double the length of the arc produced by the point of platinum. With respect to the arc, instead of its being a cone of light, having its base on the plate and its apex at the point, as was the case when the latter was platinum, it was composed of a multitude of luminous jets diverging from different points of the plate, and tending to various parts of the point of coke. This fact shows clearly the influence that may be exercised by the negative electrode, the function of which is very far from being a merely passive one. Let me add, that although the strength of the pile was precisely the same as when the point was of platinum, not only was the luminous arc much longer with the point of coke, but the heat developed in the plate of platinum was so much greater that it was soon melted and perforated. The coke being positive and the plate negative, the length of the arc was less than in the preceding case, and particularly so in air, where it was sensibly less than in a vacuum. The heat generated was however still very great, the point of coke becoming quickly incandescent throughout. I ought to add, that with the point of coke, the luminous arc was so brilliant that the blue light which I have mentioned almost entirely disappeared, which was not the case with any other kind of point.

Leaving the plate of platinum, I adjusted a zinc point. The effects were most brilliant, but of short duration, the point speedily melting. In common air, a deposit of white oxide was precipitated upon the platinum plate; in highly rarefied air (the vacuum of an air-pump), a black deposit was formed: in both cases it communicated with the positive pole. An iron point being substituted for that of zinc, equally produced in common air a brownish red deposit of oxide of iron, and in rarefied air a deposit of black oxide.

I call the attention of chemists to these two facts, as well as that of the oxidation

of the platinum at a high temperature in rarefied air. They appear to prove the influence which the state of greater or less density of the surrounding oxygen may exert on the phenomenon of oxidation and on the nature of the oxide formed. A plate and a point of soft iron were used as positive and negative electrodes, both in a vacuum and in the atmosphere; the same results appeared with a plate and a point of silver, a plate and a point of copper, and a plate and point of argentane\*. The blue light was perceived in all the experiments; coloured circles were likewise seen on all the plates when they had acted as positive electrodes in rarefied air. The silver and copper plates presented in this case very decided cavities, caused by the passage of the matter from the positive to the negative pole. The points became incandescent throughout when they served as positive electrodes; whereas when negative, they were heated only at their extremities. The copper point when positive became isolating at its extremity, and it was necessary to excite it by friction in order to renew the experiment. This circumstance is probably attributable to the formation of a thin film of oxide. The point and plate of copper gave out a luminous arc of a beautiful green light, which contrasted in a remarkable manner with the blue reflexion visible in this, as in the other experiments. Mercury was likewise employed, both as a positive and negative electrode. In a vacuum as well as in atmospheric air, the luminous effect was most brilliant. The mercury was excessively agitated, rising up in the form of a cone when it was positive, and sinking considerably below the positive point when it was negative. The quantity of vapour thrown off by the mercury during this experiment filled the bell so quickly that it was not easy to observe the details.

I shall terminate this section by stating a fact which appears to me to be important; it is the influence which the nature of the metallic points forming the electrodes exercises on the temperature which they acquire in relation to the production of the voltaic arc. If the two points are of the same metal, both platinum, or both silver, the positive one alone becomes incandescent throughout its whole length. If the silver point be positive and that of the platinum negative, the latter becomes incandescent, and the silver one is much less heated. Thus, when the voltaic arc is formed, the circuit must be regarded as completed, and then it is those parts of the circuit which present the greatest resistance to the current which become the hottest; at first it is that portion forming the arc itself, and then, in the rest of the circuit, the metal which is the worst conductor. But if the conductors be of the same material on both sides of the arc, or if there be only a slight difference of conductivity between them, then the development of heat, instead of being uniform, as it might appear it ought to be, is much greater on the positive side. This important fact evidently proves that this portion of the circuit has to resist a much more energetic action than that which the other side experiences; a fact which is confirmed by the molecular segregation accompanying this action at the positive electrode. This want

\* An alloy of copper and nickel: also known by the names of *pachfong* and *melchior*.

of resemblance in the phenomena presented by the two electrodes, although placed in conditions entirely symmetrical, deserves to be taken into serious consideration, for it may throw light upon the nature of the electric current, and upon the link which unites it with the molecular state of the bodies through which it is transmitted.

### § 2. *Influence of Magnetism on the Voltaic Arc.*

DAVY was the first who observed that a powerful magnet acts upon the voltaic arc as upon a moveable conductor, traversed by an electric current; it attracts and repels it, and this repulsion and attraction manifests itself by a change in the form of the arc. Even the action of the magnet may, as I have found, break the arc by too great an attraction or repulsion exerted upon it, causing the communication which the transmitted particles establish between the electrodes to cease.

The action which I have just mentioned is not the only one which magnetism exerts on the voltaic arc. I have already stated the curious fact, that if two points of soft iron acting as electrodes, be both placed within a helix formed of thick copper wire of several coils, the voltaic arc developed between the two points of iron ceases the moment a strong current is passed through the wire of the helices, and reappears if this current be arrested before the points have become cold. The arc cannot be formed between the two iron points when they are magnetized, whether by the action of the helices, or by that of a powerful magnet, unless they be brought much nearer to one another, and the appearance of the phenomenon is then entirely different. The transported particles appear to disengage themselves with difficulty from the positive electrode, sparks fly with noise in all directions, while in the former case, it was a vivid light without sparks, and without noise, accompanied by the transfer of a liquid mass, and this appeared to be effected with the greatest ease. It is of little moment with respect to the result of the experiment, whether the two rods of magnetized iron present to that part of their extremities between which the luminous arc springs, the same magnetic poles or different poles.

The positive electrode of iron, when it is strongly magnetized, produces, the moment that the voltaic arc is formed between it and a negative electrode of whatever nature, a very intense noise, analogous to the sharp hissing sound of steam issuing from a locomotive engine. This noise ceases simultaneously with the magnetization.

For the purpose of better analysing these different phenomena, I placed an electro-magnet of large dimensions and great power in such a manner as to enable me to place on each of its poles, or between them, different metals destined to form one of the electrodes of the pile, while one point of the same metal, or another substance, acted as the other electrode. I have alike employed as electrodes, placing them in the same circumstances, two points of the same metal or of different metals. The following are the results which I have obtained. A plate of platinum was placed on one of the poles of the electro-magnet, and a point of the same metal was placed vertically above it; the voltaic arc was produced between the plate and the point, the

plate being positive and the point negative. As soon as the electro-magnet was charged, a sharp hissing was heard ; it became necessary to bring the point of the plate nearer to enable the arc to continue, and the bluish circular spot which the platinum plate presented, became larger than when the experiment was made beyond the influence of the electro-magnet. The plate was made negative, and the point positive ; the effect was then totally different ; the luminous arc no longer maintained its vertical direction when the electro-magnet was charged, but took an oblique direction, as if it had been projected outwards towards the margin of the plate ; it was broken incessantly, each time accompanied by a sharp and sudden noise, similar to the discharge of a Leyden jar. The direction in which the luminous arc is projected, depends upon the direction of the current producing it, as likewise on the position of the plate on one or other of the two poles, or between the poles of the electro-magnet. A plate and a point of silver, a plate and a point of copper, and generally a plate and a point of any other metal, provided it be not metal too easily fused, present the same phenomena.

Copper, and still more silver, present a remarkable peculiarity. Plates of these two metals retain on their surfaces the impression of the action that took place in the experiments just described. Thus, when the plate is positive, that portion of its surface lying beneath the negative point presents a spot in the form of a helix ; as if the metal melted in this locality had undergone a gyratory motion around a centre, at the same time that it was uplifted in the shape of a cone towards the point. Moreover, the curve of the helix is fringed throughout by minute ramifications, precisely similar to the tufts which mark the passage of positive electricity in a Leyden jar. When the plate is negative and the point positive, the marks are totally different, being merely a simple point, or rather a circle of a very small diameter, whence proceeds a line more or less curved, forming a kind of tail to the comet, of which the small circle might be the nucleus : the direction of this tail depends upon the direction in which the luminous arc has been projected.

When, instead of a plate and a point, two points are used for electrodes, it is evident that no visible trace of this phenomenon can be obtained ; but both the sharp hissing and the detonations may be produced, which latter are sometimes so loud as to bear a resemblance to distant discharges of musketry. For this the electro-magnet must be very powerful, and the current which produces the arc very intense. I had observed that when I took for a positive electrode a point of platinum, and for a negative electrode a point of copper, and placed them between the two poles of the electro-magnet, the production of the voltaic arc between the two poles was accompanied by a sharp hissing noise ; whereas in the opposite case, the copper being positive, and the platinum negative, the detonations were heard, attended by a frequent breaking of the arc. On examining this phenomenon more closely, I perceived that the fact I have just mentioned was due to the platinum becoming heated much more rapidly than the copper when they were employed as electrodes in producing the voltaic arc ; and



I have satisfied myself that in order to obtain the hissing sounds, it is necessary that the positive electrode should be at a sufficiently high temperature to experience a commencement of liquefaction; for without this condition, only a series of detonations are heard. The hissing would be the result of the easy and continuous transport of matter more or less liquefied from the positive electrode, whilst the detonations would be the effect of the resistance opposed by the same matter to the disintegration of its particles when it is not sufficiently heated. Numerous experiments made with metallic points, whether of the same or different natures, as silver, iron, brass, as also platinum and copper, some of which become heated sooner than others under the same circumstances, have quite confirmed me in this view of the subject. It is merely necessary to be careful, in order to produce the hissing noise, to maintain as much as possible the continuity of the arc when once the positive electrode becomes incandescent; while, on the other hand, to obtain the detonations, one of the electrodes must be held in the hand, and then the arc frequently made and broken without waiting till the metallic points acquire too high a temperature.

It remains now to be considered why the influence of powerful magnetism, such as that exerted by the electro-magnet, is necessary for the production of these sounds, which are not heard in the ordinary experiment of the voltaic arc. This can arise only from the change which the magnet produces in the molecular constitution of the matter of the electrode, or rather in the highly diffused matter which forms the voltaic arc. This action is besides shown by the shortening of the arc, and by the remarkable difference which it presents in its appearance; it is therefore not surprising that it should also be capable of producing a phenomenon such as sound, which essentially depends on the variations in the molecular state of bodies. This view of the subject appears to me to deserve very particular attention: the results at which I have arrived, in pursuing it more closely, form the subject of the following section.

§ 3. *Influence of the permanent action of Magnetism on conducting bodies traversed by interrupted electric currents.*

FARADAY'S brilliant discovery of the action exerted by magnetism on a ray of polarized light, when that ray traverses a transparent body submitted to the action of a powerful electro-magnet, had no sooner been announced by its illustrious author, than the majority of philosophers saw in it a proof that magnetism, when at a high degree of intensity, has power to modify the molecular constitution of all bodies. They consequently attributed the phenomenon observed by FARADAY, not to the direct action of the electro-magnet on the polarized ray, but to the modification effected by this action on the molecular constitution of the substance traversed by the ray. I was of this opinion, and communicated it to Mr. FARADAY, who alludes to it in his memoir. Desirous, however, of founding this opinion on facts of a different kind, I asked myself if it were not possible to find in the electric current, an agent capable of performing the same function for opaque conducting bodies that polarized light does for

transparent ones. I had stated in my paper on the sound emitted by iron wires traversed by interrupted electric currents, that the nature as well as the intensity of the sounds were singularly modified by the molecular state of the wire submitted to the experiment. I had particularly mentioned the influence of temper and annealing, of greater or less tension, and of temperature. I had shown that iron wire, when under the influence of an action which renders it magnetic, does not emit the same sound as when it is in its natural state. Finally, by modifying, through the agency of heat, the molecular arrangement of some metals, such as platinum and brass, I had succeeded in obtaining from them, during the passage of the interrupted current, sounds, which, though feeble, were yet distinct.

The preceding reflections tended to confirm me in my opinion, that sounds produced under the influence of magnetism in the experiments on the voltaic arc, are owing to a molecular modification effected by the action of the magnet, and the more so inasmuch as the voltaic arc may be regarded as produced by a succession of interrupted currents, following each other with extreme rapidity, rather than by a perfectly continuous current. I accordingly took bars of other metals besides iron, as of tin, zinc, lead, bismuth, &c. I placed them on the poles of the electro-magnet, and I caused an interrupted current from a GROVE'S battery of from five to ten pairs to traverse them. They emitted no sound as long as the electro-magnet was not magnetized, but as soon as it was, sounds were very distinctly heard, composed of a series of strokes corresponding to the interruptions of the current, and analogous to that produced by a toothed wheel. The bars were 18 inches long, and from 9 to 10 lines square. Rods of copper, platinum, and silver produced a similar effect; a rod of iron did not emit a much louder sound under the influence of the magnet than it did when not exposed to this action.

What appeared to me most remarkable was, to find lead, a body so little elastic, yield a sound as powerful as those proceeding from the other metals, when placed under the same circumstances. The position of metallic bars with respect to the poles of the electro-magnet did not in any way modify the result of the experiment; they might be placed axially, that is to say, in the direction of the poles, or equatorially, that is, across the poles; the effect remained the same, being merely weakened as the distance between the bar and the poles increased. In order to hear the sound distinctly, when not very powerful, it was sufficient to establish a communication between the metallic bar and the ear by means of a wooden rod. In this manner the sound was not unfrequently heard prolonged some seconds, though growing constantly feebler, until it ceased entirely, after the source of magnetism had been withdrawn from the electro-magnet. Mr. FARADAY has remarked an analogous fact in the action of the transparent medium on the polarized ray, an action which does not cease immediately with the magnetism of the electro-magnet. Is this prolongation owing to the magnetization of the electro-magnet not ceasing in a sudden manner; or to its return to its primitive molecular state not taking place instantaneously in the

substance submitted to its action? This question I am unable to decide. I incline, however, rather to the latter of these explanations, seeing that the effect is not equally perceptible in all bodies, and that it is, for example, more sensible in a bar of bismuth than in one of copper.

It is needless to remark that the calorific action of the current could not have any influence on the production of the phenomenon, since there could have been no development of heat, on account of the dimension of the bars compared with the force of the current. Besides, if the expansion arising from the heating of the body traversed by interrupted currents had caused the sound, the effect would have been produced equally, whether the bar had been under the influence of the magnet or not. This last remark applies equally to the following experiments, as to the preceding.

The intensity of the sound appears to depend much less on the nature of the substance submitted to the experiment, than on its form, its volume, and its mass. Tubes of platinum, of copper and of zinc, emitted more marked sounds than massive cylinders of the same metals. I wound a leaden wire in the form of a helix round a cylinder of wood; I did the same with a very fine platinum wire, and also with copper, zinc, and tin wires, taking care to place the coils of the helices so far apart that each should be isolated. Placed like bars and tubes, whether in the direction of, or across the poles of the electro-magnet, these helices emitted very powerful sounds when, the electro-magnet being charged, they were traversed by the interrupted current. It was particularly surprising to hear the lead wire emit so strong a sound. A helix constructed with copper wire, covered with silk, and composed of several coils wound round each other, emitted a very intense sound; it also emitted one, but much feebler, under the action of the electro-magnet.

It is almost needless to remark, that in all these experiments an ordinary magnet produces the same effect as an electro-magnet. But what is more interesting, is to replace the action of the electro-magnet by that of a helix traversed by a strong continuous current, in the axis of which helix is placed the bar, the tube or the coiled wire, through which the interrupted current is transmitted. Experiments have shown me that in this case the results are the same; the intensity of the sounds is not very different, especially when tubes and wires coiled as helices are used.

If, between the exterior helix and the metal submitted to the action, a tube of soft iron is placed, the effect is a little heightened: it is neither increased nor lessened when the tube is of copper, only in this case another sound is heard which seems to proceed from the copper tube. This tube, however, is not traversed by a current, but it is probably acted upon by the currents of induction, which the interrupted currents traversing the conductor placed in the axis of the helix produce in it. I constructed a double helix formed of two thick copper wires covered with silk and coiled, each forming several circumvolutions, the one exterior to the other. In making a continuous current pass through the exterior wire, and an interrupted

current through the interior one, I heard a remarkably intense sound. In the reverse case, the sound existed, but was much weaker. This fact is evidently connected with the known property of helices traversed by electric currents exercising scarcely any magnetic influence exteriorly, whilst in the interior this action is very energetic.

Metals and solid bodies are not the only substances which produce the phenomena I have just described; all conducting bodies, whatever may be their state or their nature, appear to be capable of producing them. Thus, I have observed them with pieces of charcoal of all kinds and shape. Mercury also produces them in a very marked manner. I have inclosed mercury in a tube of glass an inch in diameter, and ten inches long: the tube was completely full and closed with care, so that the mercury could have no motion. As soon as it was traversed by an interrupted current, transmitted by means of two platinum wires, and the electro-magnet or the helix was made to act upon it, a sound was heard remarkable for its intensity. When the mercury was placed in an open trough, instead of being inclosed in a tube, it likewise produced a sound, and in addition there was seen on its surface an agitation or vibratory motion, very different from the gyratory motion observed by DAVY, which appears under the influence of the poles of a magnet when traversed by a continuous current.

Dilute sulphuric acid, and what is even better, salt water, were successively put in a capsule of platinum placed on one of the poles of an electro-magnet. A point of platinum immersed in the liquid, served, together with the capsule, to send an interrupted current through it. A sound was again heard, but less distinct, on account of the noise produced by the disengagement of the gas: still it was so clear that no doubt could be entertained of its existence.

It may perhaps be thought that in the experiments I have just described, the sounds are produced by the mechanical action of attraction or repulsion exerted by the electro-magnet on the substance traversed by an interrupted current, and that, consequently, magnetism has no more share in the phenomenon than a finger might be supposed to have, when pressing on a sonorous cord. The simple description of the experiments shows this interpretation to be inadmissible. In the first place, the sound is the same with the wires in a helix, whether these wires be stretched or not, or whether they be of lead, platinum, or brass. Besides, how could this account for the sound produced in large masses, especially in liquids, such as mercury, and for the fact, that the position of the conductor traversed by the interrupted current with regard to the poles of the electro-magnet does not exert any influence on the phenomenon? Farther, it must be remarked that the sound in question is not a musical sound, such as would be produced by a string or mass made to vibrate by a cause acting exteriorly at its surface; it is a series of sounds corresponding exactly to the alternations of the passage of the current; like a species of collision of the particles amongst themselves. Thus, the phenomenon is molecular; and it leads to the demonstration of two important principles.

The first principle is, that the passage of the electric current modifies, even in solid bodies, the arrangement of the particles; a principle which I have already deduced from the experiments contained in my preceding memoir on this subject. The second principle is, that the action of magnetism, under whatever form it may be exerted, modifies alike the molecular constitution of all bodies, and that this modification lasts as long as the cause producing it endures, and only ceases with it. What is the nature of these two modifications? This is what we must endeavour to investigate and to ascertain. I purpose to engage in this inquiry, and indeed I have already made some attempts of which it would, however, be premature to give any account. I shall confine myself at present to a single remark, which does not appear to me to be devoid of interest: it is, that the influence of magnetism on all conducting bodies seems to impress on them, as long as it lasts, a molecular constitution similar to that which iron, and generally all bodies susceptible of magnetism possess naturally; for it develops in them the property of producing, when traversed by interrupted currents, sounds identical with those emitted also by iron and other magnetic bodies when transmitting these currents, but produced in these last without requiring the action of a magnet.