

materials, and a number of excessively minute granules equivalent to spores, or, as some would say, to cellular buds, which are to become the germs of new plants. There is something extremely mysterious in the performance of these widely different functions, by an organism which appears so excessively simple. That one and the same primitive cell should thus minister equally to absorption, nutrition, and reproduction, is an extraordinary illustration of the fact, that the smallest and simplest organized object is in itself, and, for the part it was created to perform in the operations of nature, as admirably adapted as the largest and most complicated.

This so-called red snow appears to have been first observed by the celebrated Alpine traveller, De Saussure, in 1760, who found large patches of it near the icy summit of Mont Breven, in Switzerland ; afterwards, on the Pennine Alps ; and on the Col du Géant, during his ascent of Mont Blanc. Captain Ross also remarked it extending in considerable quantities over a range of cliffs on the shore of Baffin's Bay for eight miles, and tinting the snow in some places to a depth of 12 feet. In March 1808, storms of red or rose-coloured snow fell in the Tyrol and on the Carinthian mountains—to such an extent, indeed, that the hills were covered with it to a depth of six feet. It is also recorded that, ten years later, enormous quantities overspread, “like a bloody pall,” the Apennines and the other Italian hills, terrifying the credulous inhabitants of the surrounding districts, who regarded it as an augury of imminent misfortune, and flocked to the chapels and shrines of the saints in superstitious devotion.

Mr. Macmillan remarks, however, that this phenomenon is by no means peculiar to the Arctic regions, or the highly elevated mountains of the globe. It has been discovered spreading over decayed leaves and mosses on the borders of small lakes, and in water-tanks in hot-houses ; and in greater perfection on limestone rocks washed by the spray of the Atlantic in Lismore, an island off the Argyleshire coast. Mr. Harvey, an eminent Irish botanist, has found small patches on micaceous schist near Miltoun Malbay, on calcareous rocks at Limerick, and on granite in the vicinity of Dublin, where the supply of moisture is only occasional. Mr. Macmillan has detected specimens on the large masses of unmelted snow which cover the summits of Ben Nevis and Ben Lawers, even in the warm days of July and August.

To conclude this digression : The fact, says an authority, that the red snow is capable of growing in such spots as those in which it has chiefly been found in Britain—namely, on rocks, leaves, and mosses, exposed to occasional or frequent inundations of water—seems to prove that the ice-plains of the Arctic regions, and the snow-crowned sides and summits of the European mountains, are not its natural situations. When, however, its germs have once been deposited in these barren and cheerless localities, the simplicity of its organization, and the consequent strong persistency of the vital principle in it, enable it effectually to resist the cold ; and with that extraordinary power of rapid development which characterizes in a greater or less degree all the members of the family to which it belongs, it forms in a few years, when nourished by the moisture produced by the melting of the icy snow during summer, vast and dense masses, sometimes twelve feet in depth, and extending many miles in length, which afford by their strange contrast to the painful uniformity