

ter of some of the opinions of Lucretius : but it may safely be affirmed that, although he strains the application of his general argument so as to support a belief in the eternity of matter, denying equally its creation and destructibility; yet the basis of his argument, if confined, as it ought to have been, to the existing constitution of the earth, rests on a legitimate induction from the phenomena of nature : for, certainly, there is no reason for believing that a particle of matter has either been lost or added to the earth or to the atmosphere, since their creation. And, in reasoning from the mere phenomena, Lucretius justly asks, if every thing which disappears, in consequence of age and apparent decay, is actually destroyed, whence is there a renewal of animal or vegetable life? how do rivers continue to flowⁱ? concluding with one of those beautiful illustrations, in which his poem abounds. “ It
“ may be said perhaps, that the showers, which
“ sink into the earth and are lost to our sight,
“ apparently perish : but then, from their fer-
“ tilizing effects on the soil, and their subse-
“ quent incorporation with the growing seed,
“ the harvest rises, and the vine and fig-tree
“ flourish. Hence, moreover, animal life in
“ general derives its support ; the sportive lamb
“ hence draws its nutriment from its full-fed
“ mother, and wantons round the meads and

ⁱ Lib. I. 226—232.