

they appear to require for the purposes of nutrition. We may hence infer that, in their formation, other ends were contemplated, besides their own individual existence. They seem as if commissioned to act as the scavengers of organic matter, destined to clear away all those particles, of which the continued accumulation would have tainted the atmosphere, or the waters, with infection, and spread a wide extent of desolation and of death.

In taking these general surveys of the plans adopted by nature for the universal subsistence of the objects of her bounty, we cannot help admiring how carefully she has provided the means for turning to the best account every particle of each product of organic life, whether the material be consumed as food by animals, or whether it be bestowed upon the soil, reappearing in the substance of some plant, and being in this way made to contribute, eventually, to the same ultimate object, namely, the support of animal life.

But we may carry these views still farther, and following the ulterior destination of the minuter and unheeded fragments of decomposed organizations, which we might conceive had been cast away, and lost to all useful purposes, we may trace them as they are swept down by the rains, and deposited in pools and lakes, amidst waters collected from the soil on every side. Here we find them, under favourable circumstances, again partaking of animation, and invested with various forms of infusory animalcules, which sport, in countless myriads, their ephemeral existence, within the ample regions of every drop. Yet, even these are still qualified to fulfil other objects in a more distant and far wider sphere; for, borne along, in the course of time, by the rivers into which they pass, they are at length conveyed into the sea, the great receptacle of all the particles that are detached from the objects on land. Here, also, they float not uselessly in the vast abyss, but contribute to maintain in existence incalculable hosts of animal beings, which people every portion of the wide expanse of ocean, and which rise, in regular gradation, from the microscopic monad, and scarcely vi-