

off vapour ; they perform the most beneficial offices. Another valuable purpose which they serve, may be alluded to here ; viz. the greater power of buoyancy which they communicate to water ; by means of which, the waters of the ocean are better fitted for the purposes of navigation. Nor are these the only uses of the saline matters ; for there is reason to believe, that they contribute in no small degree to the stability of the water ; and that an ocean of fresh water would speedily undergo changes, which would probably render it incompatible with animal life ; the waters of such an ocean might even be decomposed, so as seriously to interfere with the other arrangements of nature.

Lastly, who will venture to assert that the distribution of sea and of land, as they now exist, though apparently so disproportionate, is not actually necessary, as the world is at present constituted ? What would be the result, for instance, if the Pacific or the Atlantic oceans were to be converted into continents ? Would not the climates of the existing continents, as formerly observed, be completely changed by such an addition to the land ; and the whole of their fertile regions be reduced to arid deserts ? Now, this distribution of sea and of land, so wonderfully adapted as it appears to be to the present state of things, depends of course in a great measure, upon the *absolute quantity* of