

they have washed from the different soils through which they have passed. The particles of salt, which are easily dissolved, are conveyed to the sea by the water. Some philosophers, and among the rest Halley, have pretended that the saltness of the sea proceeded only from the salts of the earth, which the rivers transport therein. Others assert, that the saltness of the sea is as ancient as the sea itself, and that this salt was created that the waters might not corrupt; but we may justly suppose that the sea is preserved from corruption by the agitations produced by the winds and tides, as much as by the salt it contains; for when put in a barrel it corrupts in a few days; and Boyle relates, that a mariner, who was becalmed for 13 days, found, at the end of that time, the water so infected, that if the calm had not ceased, the greatest part of his people would have perished. The water of the sea is also mixed with a bituminous oil, which gives it a disagreeable taste, and renders it very unhealthful. The quantity of salt contained in sea water is about a fortieth part, and is nearly equally saline throughout, at top as well as bottom, under the line, and at the Cape of Good Hope; although there are several