

mosphere which surrounds our earth, we should view a compound probably the most complex in nature: for into this circumambient ocean of air, as it is called by Lucretius^b, are carried up whatever exhalations arise not only from the earth itself, but from every organized form of matter whether living or in a state of decomposition that is found upon the earth's surface; the dews of morning, the balms of evening, the fragrance of every plant and flower; the breath and characteristic odour of every animal; the vapour invisibly arising from the surface of the whole ocean and its tributary streams; and, lastly, those circumscribed and baneful effluvia, however generated, which when confined to definite portions of the atmosphere produce those various forms of fever which infest particular districts: or those more awful and mysterious miasmata, which, arising in some distant region, and advancing by a slow but certain march, carry terror and death to the inhabitants of another hemisphere.

Such is the complex character of the atmosphere; and, indeed, from this assemblage of vapours contained in it, it has received its peculiar appellation; being the receptacle, or magazine, as it were, of terrestrial exhalations^c.

^b Semper enim quodcunque fluit de rebus; id omne
Aëris in magnum fertur mare. Lib. V. 277, 8.

^c Ἀτμῶν σφαῖρα.