

Of such phenomena the most prominent are the general distribution of the sea and the land ; and the relative proportions of their superficial extent. With reference to the sea, although we may never know all the ends which are answered by its saltness, and why its depth should be greater in some parts than others ; and although we can perhaps form no more than a conjecture as to the advantages derivable from the tides ; (the prevention, for instance, of a stagnant state of the water ;) or from the accumulation of ice near the poles ; (the cooling, probably, of the general mass of the atmosphere, and the consequent production of currents of air ;) yet of its mode of distribution, and of the relative extent of its surface, we readily apprehend the reason ; simply in considering that all those forms of water which contribute to the fertilization of the earth, or the support of animal life, are derived from the ocean. Were the superficial extent of this therefore much less than it is, the quantity evaporated would not be sufficient for the intended purposes ; or, were the distribution different from what it is, were the sea, for instance, to occupy one hemisphere and the land the other, the water evaporated would not be so equally diffused through the atmosphere as it is at present.

And, with respect to the land, how beautifully does the particular arrangement and character of its surface conspire with its general distribu-