

6. That small inland seas, though communicating with the ocean, are much less salt than the ocean.

7. That the Mediterranean contains rather larger proportions of salt, than the ocean.*

The saltness of the sea, therefore, is considerably influenced, at least at its surface, by the neighbourhood of large rivers, and by permanent accumulations of ice; and in this way, the inferior saltness of small inland seas, particularly in high latitudes, may in general be explained; as most of these inland seas are supplied with comparatively large quantities of fresh water, from the rivers flowing into them. On the other hand, the superior saltness of the Mediterranean, has been ascribed to the immense evaporation from its surface; the consequence principally, of its being situated in a warmer climate.

The saline contents of the ocean are of immense importance in the economy of nature. Such indeed is their importance, that it is doubtful whether the present order of things could be maintained without them. The effects of these saline matters, will be more particularly pointed out hereafter. In this place, we shall only remark, that by lowering the freezing point of water; and by diminishing its tendency to give

* Philos. Trans. 1819.