would be in the dark. The hemisphere, the sky, the world, could only be *illuminated* as it is illuminated, by the light of the sun being from all sides and in every direction reflected to the eye, by particles as numerous, as thickly scattered, and as widely diffused, as are those of the air.

Another general quality of the atmosphere is the power of evaporating fluids. The adjustment of this quality to our use is seen in its action upon the sea. In the sea, water and salt are mixed together most intimately; yet the atmosphere raises the water, and leaves the salt. Pure and fresh as drops of rain descend, they are collected from brine. If evaporation be solution, (which seems to be probable,) then the air dissolves the water and not the salt. Upon whatever it be founded, the distinction is critical; so much so, that when we attempt to imitate the process by art, we must regulate our distillation with great care and nicety, or, together with the water, we get the bitterness, or at least the distastefulness, of the marine substance: and, after all, it is owing to this original elective power in the air, that we can effect the separation which we wish, by any act or means whatever.

By evaporation, water is carried up into the air: by the converse of evaporation, it falls down upon the earth. And how does it fall? Not by the clouds being all at once reconverted into water and descending like a sheet; not in rushing down in columns from a spout; but in moderate drops as from a colander. Our watering-pots are made to imitate showers of rain. Yet *a priori*, I should have thought either of the two former methods *more likely* to *have* taken place than the last.

By respiration, flame, putrefaction, air is rendered unfit for the support of animal life. By the con-