

small that four of them placed side by side would not make up the width of a common hair, has often exerted an absolute sway over whole nations, and, as history shows, dismayed even warlike armies in the field.

In large seas a similar blood-red color extending over a wide area is produced by microscopic *plants*. These are fine and delicate fibres of a purple-red color, of the thickness at most of a single silk thread; and, in spite of their plant nature, gifted with the power of crawling hither and thither in the water, and of oscillating like a pendulum; hence their name—*Oscillaria*. These thread-like plantlets grow in millions at the bottoms of many seas and cover them with a thick down; but the sunshine exercises over them, as over all other plants, a peculiar attractive power, and causes them to rise up from the bottom of the water and collect upon the surface, as it were in order to sun themselves. The water then appears, through these *Oscillaria*, as if it were covered with foaming purple or dark blood. If the sunshine ceases, the plants sink again to the bottom, and the red color of the water vanishes. If the sun returns again, the sea will presently resume its bloody color. Not only was this phenomenon observed from the earliest to the latest times, but, as we remarked before, it is also not improbable that the Red Sea owes its name to these *Oscillaria*. The renowned naturalist, Ehrenberg, found, in the winter of 1823, an inlet of this sea which was covered as far as the eye could reach with a bloody foam, which was found, on microscopic investigation, to consist of innumerable bunches of these diminutive plants. Another account of this red color in the same sea was given later by a French traveller, Dupont, who had not previously heard of Ehrenberg's discovery. Since that time similar colors, caused by microscopic plants, have been observed in other seas in many parts of the world—in the Chinese Sea and in the Indian Ocean, on the coasts of California, as well as on those of Portugal. At the last-named place the sea was colored over a space of six square miles, and that by plants which were scarcely the one six-hundredth part