

Nature does not, of course, transform the entire store of air into humus, or soil. For if the time should come when Nature had so transformed about half of the air, the air would, at the equator at sea level, become as cold as it is now on top of the Kilomonscharo Mountain, which, as heretofore stated, lies just below the equator and is yet covered the year round with snow and ice. The result of such an extraordinary transformation of air as has just been supposed, would then be that the whole earth would be encrusted in snow and ice. It would be impossible for plant life to continue and with its gradual extinction animal life would, of course, cease to be.

Now it will depend largely on humanity itself how many million years it will require Nature to transform so much of the air into solids as is required to bring about the extinction of plant and animal life. We can economize in our use of air; we can also squander air. For example: supposing the food we consume, after it has passed through our bodies, is conducted to the ocean, then the air is deprived of the weight of this food. If, on the other hand, this same material, instead of being conducted to the bottom of the ocean, is changed into air, or is used, let us say, as fertilizer for plants that once more serve as nourishment for human beings, then we can consume the same food over again without greatly reducing the density of the air. Only those small particles are subtracted from the air that our bodies retain. This economical use of