

people at length gave way to the conviction that they had in this case to do with a phenomenon, striking and rare, to be sure, but yet by no means supernatural or portentous. They even attempted to utilize the brilliant red coloring matter in the dyeing of silks, but it disappeared in January, 1820.

The most accurate information which we possess concerning the nature of these phenomena we owe to the renowned naturalist to whom I have already had occasion to refer—Ehrenberg—who, in the year 1848, through the aid of the microscope, revealed certain facts which throw considerable light on these hitherto mysterious appearances. He observed that the red colors are readily propagated in bread and many other foods, and there collect themselves gradually into lumps of red jelly, which, when moist, resemble thick or curdled blood; but, when the moisture has left them, present the appearance of black, dried-up blood. Under the microscope, Ehrenberg perceived that the red substance consisted of a colorless fluid in which innumerable minute red corpuscles reside. These were found to possess a trembling motion, from which fact Ehrenberg was induced to consider the corpuscles as animalculæ, and to apply to them the name of *wunder* or *purpur-Monaden* (*Monas prodigiosa*), while other scientists, as remarked above, look upon the red coloring matter as composed of fungous plants. On account of the infinitesimal dimensions of these organisms (there are upwards of thirty millions on the space of a square line), the question can scarcely be decided. This much, however, is certain, that these colors may be produced whenever foods are closed up in moist air; and this conclusion seems to be further corroborated by frequent recurrence of these phenomena in connection with the sacramental bread, which is usually kept in damp rooms in churches, where the conditions are specially favorable to the generation of the *Monas prodigiosa*.

In general, however, these phenomena must be considered among the rarer, although they have on different occasions, of late years, been produced artificially, and, among other places, in our own laboratories in Breslau.