

must have died; plants constituted as they are, must have withered; the lives of animals which feed upon plants must have perished. Its very *insipidity*, which is one of those negative qualities, renders it the best of all menstrua. Having no taste of its own, it becomes the sincere vehicle of every other. Had there been a taste in water, be it what it might, it would have infected every thing we ate or drank with an unfortunate repetition of the same flavour.

Another thing in this element, not less to be admired, is the constant *round* which it travels; and by which, without suffering either adulteration or waste, it is continually offering itself to the wants of the habitable globe. From the sea are exhaled those vapours which form the clouds; these clouds descend in showers, which, penetrating into the crevices of the hills, supply springs; which springs flow in little streams into the valleys, and there uniting, become rivers; which rivers, in return, feed the ocean. So there is an incessant circulation of the same fluid; and not one drop, probably, more or less now, than there was at the creation. A particle of water takes its departure from the surface of the sea in order to fulfil certain important offices to the earth, and having executed the service which was assigned to it, returns to the bosom which it left.

Some have thought that we have too much water upon the globe, the sea occupying above three quarters of its whole surface. But the expanse of the ocean, immense as it is, may be no more than sufficient to fertilize the earth.

III. OF FIRE, we have said that it dissolves. The only idea, probably, which this term raised in the reader's mind was that of fire melting metals, resins, and some other substances; fluxing ores,