

Miscellanies

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Resumo de Miscellanies

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A Lecture Delivered At The Bristol Institution, February 10, 1863., 0 the student of Final Causes there are no facts in nature that on a first view present more difficulties than those which belong to decay and destruction.

Fertile lands in a very few hours overspread by a desolating inroad of the sea, on the retreat of which, if ever it does withdraw, there is left for a time a sandy, stony desert; plants of exquisite organisation springing above the soil and dying undeveloped; forests and prairies consumed by fire; myriads of animals, multitudes of human beings perishing in full life and strength: these and many like facts are at first sight startling.

The mighty, ever-teeming mother Earth?is she thwarted by some malignant power in her schemes of beneficence ? or, by some blind law of productiveness, does she go on for ever throwing off her wonderful progeny, careless, when they have left her bosom, whether they live or die, or what ultimate destiny awaits them ?

But we will not now ask questions. Let us survey in detail a few of the phenomena of waste, and either when they are under our eyes, or when we are recalling them, some obvious enquiries will suggest themselves.

Among the fragile forms of the animated world around us, one is so used to the sight of destruction, that the questions alluded to are almost less likely to arise than when, by some accidental circumstance, we become aware of decay among objects which had seemed to be fixed and enduring.

I shall not easily forget the impression made upon me one day, when I stood for the first time in a scene of savagegrandeur, which is, I dare say, well known to many of this audience ?the upper region of the Mer de Glace.

It was the early morning; some golden light had just begun to shoot into the deep ind...

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