

countless myriads of these animals,* that are as it were momentarily produced, every individual possesses an indestructible skeleton, it is easy to conceive how important an addition is made to the solid crust of the earth by this marvellous agency.

Many strata are entirely composed of the shields or skeletons of infusoria; and in Sweden an edible earth, resembling fine flour, and celebrated for its nutritious qualities, wholly consists of the shells of microscopic animalcules: this earth occurs in layers nearly thirty feet in thickness. Deposits of this kind are constantly in progress wherever a condition suitable to the economy of the infusoria exists. In lakes, marshes, and peat-bogs, the animalcules which inhabit the water pass through their brief period of existence, and their indestructible skeletons then sink to the bottom, and form new deposits. Professor Bailey discovered in a peat-bog in America, layers several hundred yards in extent of a white, earthy substance, which is wholly made up of the silicious shells of infusoria.† To silence all scepticism on this subject, Ehrenberg obtained considerable quantities of silicious earth from existing species of infusoria; and in which, by the aid of the microscope, the skeletons of the animalcules from which it was derived can be distinctly seen.‡

* Ehrenberg states that a corpuscle almost imperceptible, can become in four days 170 billions, or as many single individual animalcules as are contained in two cubic feet of the slate of Bilin.

† American Journal of Science, vol. xxxv. page 118.

‡ Annals of Natural History, No. III. page 131.