

infested by myriads of these creatures which have consumed nearly every green thing. The effect of the havoc committed by them may be estimated by the famine they occasioned. St. Augustin mentions a plague of this kind in Africa which destroyed no less than 800,000 men in the kingdom of Massinissa alone, and many more upon the territories bordering upon the sea. It is also related, that in the year 591, an infinite army of locusts migrated from Africa into Italy; and, after grievously ravaging the country, were cast into the sea, when there arose a pestilence from their stench which carried off nearly a million of men and beasts.

In the Venetian territory, also, in 1478, more than thirty thousand persons are said to have perished in a famine occasioned by this scourge; and other instances are recorded of their devastations in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, &c. In different parts of Russia also, Hungary, and Poland,—in Arabia and India, and other countries, their visitations have been periodically experienced. Although they have a preference for certain plants, yet, when these are consumed, they will attack almost all the remainder. In the accounts of the invasions of locusts, the statements which appear most marvellous relate to the prodigious mass of matter which encumbers the sea wherever they are blown into it, and the pestilence arising from its putrefaction. Their dead bodies are said to have been, in some places, heaped one upon another, to the depth of four feet, in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania; and when, in Southern Africa, they were driven into the sea, by a north-west wind, they formed, says Barrow, along the shore, for fifty miles, a bank three or four feet high.* But when we consider that forests are stripped of their foliage, and the earth of its green garment, for thousands of square miles, it may well be supposed that the volume of animal matter produced may equal that of great herds of quadrupeds and flights of large birds suddenly precipitated into the sea.

The occurrence of such events at certain intervals, in hot countries, like the severe winters and damp summers returning after a series of years in the temperate zone, affect the proportional numbers of almost all classes of animals and plants, and are probably fatal to the existence of many which would otherwise thrive there; while, on the contrary, they must be favourable to certain species which, if deprived of such aid, might not maintain their ground.

Although it may usually be remarked that the extraordinary increase of some one species is immediately followed and checked by the multiplication of another, yet this does not always happen; partly because many species feed in common on the same kinds of food, and partly because many kinds of food are often consumed indifferently by one and the same species. In the former case, where a variety of different animals have precisely the same taste, as, for example, when many insectivorous birds and reptiles devour alike some particular fly or beetle, the unusual numbers of these insects may cause only a

* Travels in Africa, p. 257. Kirby and Spence, vol. i. p. 215.