

absurdity in supposing it not to be, or to be otherwise. What should the ocean do but lash its wonted shore, and stun the ear by its eternal roarings ? Why should the river forsake its banks by

a new species, suggestions of a far different complexion arise. Do we know of any secondary causes or powers of nature whose co-operation could produce a single species—not to say an elephant or a tiger, but even an infusorial animalcule ? We have elsewhere commented on the doctrine of the transmutation of species, and on the present occasion have only to speak of their origin. Here we have but two alternatives before us, either to admit the hypothesis of spontaneous generation, or a direct interference of creative power. With respect to equivocal generation in its full sense, and as held by Lucretius and Epicurus, we believe it is entertained by no naturalist of the present day ; even La Marck, while maintaining that the simpler plants and animals originated in this way, repudiates its possibility in the case of higher organisations. The usual doctrine is to maintain the spontaneous production of the simpler organised bodies, and then deduce the higher, by a process of development and transmutation of species. As regards the evidences of spontaneous production, its advocates have not produced a single direct fact—nothing but negative and indirect reasoning has been brought forward. From the publications of Redi, in the seventeenth century, down to those of Ehrenberg, the domain of spontaneous generation has been gradually narrowed, so that the hypothesis, if by no means abandoned, has been rendered untenable. The chief arguments in favour of the idea were derived from the history of infusorial microscopic animalcules, and from the difficulty of explaining the dissemination of entozoa in the cavities and