

action of mechanical powers of more acknowledged and obvious force. But it must be remembered that whether the process of destruction be slow or rapid, and though it may, to our limited views, often appear contemptible in its effects, it is a process that never ceases. However limited these actions may have been as to the past, their unintermitting continuance through a duration to which we can assign no limits, must produce effects which we should vainly attempt to measure by the small portion of that time which is bounded by our own experience. Yet it will be seen, that even within the short records of history, the changes which Nature thus effects, are no less extensive than remarkable.

If the mere solvent power of water on the earths is the most feeble of these agents, its action is still unquestionable, and must not be overlooked. That it does dissolve silica and lime both, has already been shown; and thus it may often loosen the bonds by which the more insoluble substances are united, so as to produce a greater effect of destruction than would result merely from its solvent power. It is so easy to trace its action on limestones, that instances of this nature need not be adduced. The surfaces of quartz rock which are exposed to rain, are often polished as if by a lapidary's wheel, and the peculiar roundness of the angles, here evinces the cause. The effect, however, in such cases as this, may fairly be taken as nothing; since, as far as direct solution is here concerned, scarcely eternity itself could be imagined capable of dissolving a mountain of this refractory material. But the looser aggregated rocks of this nature, or the common sandstones, give every where abundant proofs of its influence, in the corrosion they suffer on long exposure, even where most