

are hourly and obvious. In the mountains, they are seen in every fragment; and every river carries with it something to be deposited in the beds of lakes, in the lower lands, or in the seas: while the movements of the ocean transfer the materials which its shores received; spreading them to form the germs of future strata. But the velocity of this process is variable. The nature of the climate, the forms of the land, the qualities of the rocks, with numerous minuter causes, everywhere modify results which still terminate in that destruction to which every thing must submit. In Egypt, the resistance of the works of nature is not less remarkable than that which still preserves its architecture for our instruction; and while the waste of the lower lands of England is imperceptible, every winter is taking from the mountains of Scotland to add to its plains and shores. And thus also does the more durable granite long brave those elements under which the softer sandstones are hourly yielding. The alluvia themselves will be examined in a future chapter; the business of the present is of a more general and comprehensive nature.

*Of Rivers and their actions.*

The actions of rivers consist in destruction and in reproduction; the former process being evidently subservient to the latter, and the whole constituting one of the great Designs of Nature, for ends of the highest importance respecting both a nearer and a more distant future. I commence, of course, with the process of destruction.

From the moment that the rains first descended, the rivers began to flow: but if there was, at the beginning, such a condition of the atmosphere as has reasonably been supposed, from the preceding effect of heat on the ocean, the fall of water, and the consequent flow