

Progress of the Downs.

THE downs or hillocks of sand which the sea throws up on low coasts, when its bottom is sandy, have already been mentioned. Wherever human industry has not succeeded in fixing these downs, they advance as irresistibly upon the land as the alluvial depositions of the rivers advance into the sea. In their progress inland, they push before them the large pools formed by the rain which falls upon the neighbouring grounds, and whose communication with the sea is intercepted by them. In many places they proceed with a frightful rapidity, overwhelming forests, buildings, and cultivated fields. Those upon the coast of the Bay of Biscay * have already overwhelmed a great number of villages mentioned in the records of the

the Araxis, from which the Tanais, which is a branch of it, takes its origin, into the Palus Mæotis." Who does not see that this nonsense, which is neither founded upon peripli nor periods, is nothing else than the strange idea of Alexander's soldiers, who took the Jaxartes or Tanais of the Transoxian for the Don or Tanais of Scythia? Arrian and Pliny distinguish these two rivers from each other, but the distinction does not appear to have been made in the time of Aristotle. How, then, could such geographers as these furnish us with geological documents?

* See the Report upon the Downs of the Gulf of Gascony (or Bay of Biscay) by M. Tassin.—Mont. de-Marsan, an x.