

the mechanical operation of the water ; and that a great part of the land called Alluvial, generally owes its existence to this cause *. But if, upon farther consideration, the conglomerates appear to derive their origin in a similar way with rolled masses of gravel, they afford evidence, nevertheless, of the elevated station of the water in the neighbourhood, from which they had been before removed ; for their conglomeration could take place only under water ; and, with few exceptions, they occupy an incomparably greater elevation than any of the coal formations, or any of the beds of rocks which enclose the remains of land animals.

Geognosy certainly contains many facts, which cannot be explained, but by a change from dry land to the bottom of the sea, although our knowledge of them is still so imperfect, that we cannot hazard a probable conjecture respecting the numbers of these changes, whether they commence at the same or at different periods in the various quarters of the world, and whether they are local or universal. These changes appear neither sudden nor violent, such as we consider revolutions of the earth, but at all times proceed with silent and regular steps, and depend upon similar causes, concealed it is true from us, such as the universal retreat of the waters from their original height to the present bed of the ocean. We do not belong to those geologists who divert the world from its axis for the purpose of explaining the inequalities of its surface, at whose command the Earth sometimes opens her bosom to engulf the sea, and at other times the floodgates of Heaven are lifted

* Vide note on the Non-mechanical Action of pure Water.