

particles, and trace light furrows in their passage. These channels soon unite in the deepest cavities which are indented in the mountain's side; they glide along the deepened valleys which are formed at the foot, and proceed thus to produce those rivers and streams which return to the sea those waters which had been previously imbibed from it by the atmosphere. At the melting of the snows, or when a storm arises, the mass of these mountainous waters suddenly increases, and precipitates itself with a rapidity proportional to the slope of the declivity. Dashing with violence against the foot of those ridges which cover the sides of all the lofty valleys, the torrents carry with them the rounded fragments of which they are composed; they rub and polish them in their passage; but in proportion as they arrive in the closer valleys where their fall is lessened, or in large basins where they can spread themselves, they cast on the beach the largest of these stones which they have thus rounded; the lesser are deposited lower, and nothing reaches the main channel of the river but the smallest particles, or a scarcely perceptible slime. The course of these waters, before they form the larger and lower stream, is often through an extensive and deep lake, in which they deposit their mud, and emerge perfectly pure. But the lower rivers, and all the streams which arise in the lower mountains or hills, also produce, in the soils through which they run, effects more or less analogous to those of the torrents of the lofty mountains. When they are swollen by heavy rains, they assail the foot of the clayey or sandy hills which oppose them in their progress, and carry portions of them into the lower lands which they overflow, and which each inundation thus tends to elevate to a