

PHYSICAL PROOFS OF THE NEWNESS OF THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CONTINENTS.

On the contrary, in closely examining what has taken place on the surface of the globe since it was left dry for the last time, and the continents have hence assumed their present form, at least in the highest parts, we clearly see that the last revolution, and consequently the establishment of present society, cannot be very ancient. It is one of the results, at the same time the most clearly proved, and the least regarded in sound geology; a result the more valuable as it unites, in an unbroken chain, natural and civil history.

In measuring the effects produced in a certain time, by causes still at work, and in comparing them with those which they have produced since the commencement of their operations, we can determine nearly the very moment whence their action may be dated, which is of necessity the same as that when our continents received their present form, or that of the last retreat of the waters.

It is in fact, from this retreat that we must begin to calculate the wearing away of our steep eminences, and the formation of banks of debris at their bases; that our present rivers began to flow and to deposite their alluvial spoils; that our present vegetation began to extend itself and to produce mould; that our present cliffs have begun to be worn away by the sea; that our present downs have begun to be accumulated by the wind; as also from this epoch must we calculate that colonies of the human race commenced or recommenced to spread themselves abroad, and to form establish-