

of the ancients any grounds for our physical proposition. (1)

#### PROGRESS OF THE DOWNS.

We have already spoken of the downs, or those sand heaps which the sea throws on flat shores when its bottom is sandy. Whenever the industry of man has failed in confining them, these downs advance inland as irresistibly as the alluvial deposits of rivers advance towards the sea; they drive before them pools formed by the rainwater of the lands in their vicinity, whose progress towards the sea they intercept, and their advance in many places is made with alarming rapidity. Forests, buildings, cultivated fields, are overwhelmed by them. Those of the Bay of Biscay (2) have already covered a number of villages mentioned in the accounts of the middle ages, and at this time, in the single depart-

(1) For instance, M. Dureau de Lamalle, in his 'Physical Geography of the Black sea,' quotes Aristotle (*Meteor*, lib. 1. c. 13) as "telling us that in his time there were many ancients, periods and peripli, proving that there was a canal leading from the Caspian sea to the Palus Mæotis." But Aristotle says in the passage in question, (ed. de Duval, i. p. 545,) "From the Paropamisus, amongst other rivers, descend the Bactrus, the Choaspes, and Araxes, whence the Tanais, a branch of it, takes its rise into the Palus Mæotis." Who cannot see that this blunder, founded neither on periods nor peripli, was only the wild ideas of Alexander's soldiery, who took the Jaxartes or Tanais of the Transoxian for the Don or Tanais of Scythia? Arrian and Pliny distinguish them; but this was not the case in Aristotle's time. How then can geological arguments be derived from such geographers?

(2) See the Report of the Downs of the Bay of Biscay by M. Tassin, Mont de Marsan, an X.