

CHAP. XI.

POPULAR VIEWS AND ECONOMICAL APPLICATIONS OF
GEOLOGY.

THE favour with which geology has been received into the circle of modern science, is mainly attributable to its all-pervading and expanded harmony with other branches of study, with popular sources of intellectual enjoyment, and important commercial and agricultural applications. Public taste changes from time to time its objects of special attention, but not capriciously nor unjustly; and geology has been advanced rapidly during the last 10, 20, and 30 years, because its march had been previously retarded, and because in its progress all other parts of the great contemplation of nature were deeply interested. The preceding pages have given illustration of the real and mutual dependence of geology, and the parts of human study which relate to the living forms, habits, and history of plants and animals, — the energies resident in and acting among the atoms of matter — the forces which operate in the air and water above, and in the rocky depths below the surface of the earth — the constitution and phenomena of the planets, and the state of the ethereal spaces in which suns and planets move, at distances which are beyond expression and conception. Considered in these aspects, geology is a boundless study; and yet only the indolent will turn away from its allurements, since every part of its truths is full of rare and profitable results.

It is sometimes, not very fairly, objected to modern geology, that the superior accuracy and power of research which it has turned on the ancient mysteries of