

from the face of the earth—a country more marvellous than any that even romance or poetry has ventured to portray.

29. EFFECTS OF STREAMS AND RIVERS. — In pursuance of this object I shall first take into consideration the action of running water—of streams, and rivers. I need not dwell on those meteorological causes by which the descent of moisture on the surface of the earth is regulated; but shall content myself with observing, that rivers are the great natural outlets which convey the superfluous moisture of the land into the grand reservoir, the ocean. And so exactly is the balance of expenditure and supply maintained, that all the rivers on the face of the earth, though constantly pouring their mighty floods into the ocean, do not affect its level in the slightest perceptible degree; we may therefore assume that the quantity of moisture evaporated from the surface of the sea, is exactly equal to the sum of all the water, in all the rivers in the world. But although the body of fresh-water poured by the rivers into the basin of the ocean is again displaced by evaporation, yet there is an operation silently and constantly going on, which becomes an agent of perpetual change. The rivulets which issue from the mountains are more or less charged with earthy particles, worn from the rocks and strata over which they flow: their united streams in their progress towards the rivers become more and more loaded with adventitious matter; and as the power of