

produces about 700,000 bushels of salt annually. At a distance of from thirty to forty feet below the surface is a hard bed of gypsum, which is generally about 150 feet thick: through this a small hole is bored to the river of brine, which is in depth about twenty-two inches, and beneath which is a hard rock of salt. The brine rises rapidly through the aperture, and is pumped into a capacious reservoir, whence it is conveyed into iron boilers for evaporation; it is supposed to be stronger than any other in the kingdom, and contains above one-fourth part its weight of salt. In the present state of our knowledge the origin of these beds of pure salt cannot be satisfactorily explained; for if we suppose them to have arisen from a mere evaporation of sea-water, it is difficult to account for the absence of all extraneous matter; it is more probable that their origin may in some measure be due to igneous action, as chloride of sodium is one of the products of volcanic emanations. The occurrence of the two most powerful acids, sulphuric (in the gypsum, or sulphate of lime), and the muriatic (in the salt), so largely associated together, is a fact which, in a more advanced state of chemical science, may probably throw light on this question.*

22. MAGNESIAN LIMESTONE, OR ZECHSTEIN.—The magnesian limestone is generally of a light

* Bakewell's Geology, p. 251. Lyell's Principles of Geology, vol. ii. p. 17.