

peculiar action upon light, are supposed to be silicious.* At present, my information on this highly interesting inquiry extends no farther.

40. RELATIVE AGE OF MOUNTAINS.—We have seen that the intrusions of melted rocks, have not only altered the chemical nature of the strata through which they were erupted, but have also changed their position and relations, and produced corresponding modifications in the physical geography of the dry land, transforming plains into mountain peaks, and occasioning the subsidence of elevated regions to the bottom of the deep. As these revolutions took place at various epochs, separated from each other by periods of repose, sometimes considerable, sometimes brief, it is manifest that the existing mountain chains are of very different ages. By a careful examination of the phenomena which bear upon this question, the relative antiquity of many of the principal ranges has been determined; or, in other terms, it has been ascertained during what geological epochs the Alps, Pyrenees, Andes, &c. were elevated above the waters. My observations on this subject, must, however, be restricted to an explanation of the mode of induction employed, and a brief notice of some

* These are inserted in the Appendix N. I would refer the reader, whose curiosity is awakened by these remarks, to the Third Part of Mr. Taylor's scientific Memoirs, for a translation of two of Ehrenberg's Memoirs on Fossil Infusoria. London, 1807, price 6s.