

a few centres over wide continental spaces. The theory, therefore, that all the races of man have come from one common stock receives support from every investigation which forces us to expand our ideas of the duration of past time, or which multiplies the number of years that have passed away since the origin of man. Hitherto, geology has neither enlarged nor circumscribed the "human period;" but simply proved that in the history of animated nature it is comparatively modern, or the last of a long series of antecedent epochs, in each of which the earth has been successively peopled by distinct species of animals and plants.

In an early stage of society the necessity of hunting acts as a principle of repulsion, causing men to spread with the greatest rapidity over a country, until the whole is covered with scattered settlements. It has been calculated that eight hundred acres of hunting-ground produce only as much food as half an acre of arable land. When the game has been in a great measure exhausted, and a state of pasturage succeeds, the several hunter tribes, being already scattered, may multiply in a short time into the greatest number which the pastoral state is capable of sustaining. The necessity, says Brand, thus imposed upon the two savage states, of dispersing themselves far and wide over the country, affords a reason why, at a very early period, the worst parts of the earth may have become inhabited.

But this reason, it may be said, is only applicable in as far as regards the peopling of a continuous continent; whereas the smallest islands, however remote from continents, have almost always been found inhabited by man. St. Helena, it is true, afforded an exception; for when that island was discovered in 1501, it was only inhabited by sea-fowl, and occasionally by seals and turtles, and was covered with a forest of trees and shrubs, all of species peculiar to it, with one or two exceptions, and which seem to have been expressly created for this remote and insulated spot.*

The islands also of Mauritius, Bourbon, Pitcairns, and Juan Fernandez, and those of the Galapagos archipelago, one of which is seventy miles long, were uninhabited when first discovered, and, what is more remarkable than all, the Falkland Islands, which together are 120 miles in length by 60 in breadth, and abounding in food fit for the support of man.

Drifting of canoes to vast distances.— But very few of the numerous coral islets and volcanos of the vast Pacific, capable of sustaining a few families of men, have been found untenanted; and we have, therefore, to inquire whence and by what means, if all the members of the great human family have had one common source, could those savages have migrated. Cook, Forster, and others, have remarked that parties of savages in their canoes must have often lost their way, and must have been driven on distant shores, where they were forced to remain, deprived both of the means and of the

* See p. 593.