

fact, the whole of Egypt seems to be an accumulation of fine clay, transported by its goodly river from remoter and loftier regions. Independently of the action of rivers, the ocean is constantly wearing down the rocks which it washes, and daily reducing into sedimentary substance vast quantities of their material, which comes to be diffused by tides and currents over the bed of the sea, and sifted by the joint action of gravity and water in motion. But sediment, it may be said, is soft and loose, and never, at all events, attains the consistency of rock. This is a mistake. Certain substances, such as limestone, become hard immediately on being precipitated from water. And there are various ways in which the hardening of watery deposits can be rationally enough accounted for.* The mud

* Stratified rocks, that is, deposits from water, may be solidified in many ways. Solid matter may exist in water either in a state of chemical solution or mechanical suspension. Deposits from a solution are aggregations of crystals, and usually coherent: such is the nature of some calcareous and silicious rocks, which are formed in the same manner as refined sugar or salt, from the evaporation of sea-water. By far the greater number of rocks have been derived from matters held in suspension in water, and such were, of course, originally merely loose and incoherent masses of sand or clay: thus solidification has been a sub-