

of any value which we possess ; and again during the three mild winters that immediately preceded the last severe one,—that of 1855,—and which owed their mildness apparently to that very circumstance. It was found during the latter seasons that the temperature of the sea around our western coasts rose from one and a half to two degrees above its ordinary average ; and it must be remembered how, during these seasons, every partial frost that set in at once yielded to a thaw whenever a puff of wind from the west carried into the atmosphere the caloric of the water over which it swept. The amount of heat discharged into the Atlantic by this great ocean-current is enormous. ‘A simple calculation,’ says Lieutenant Maury, ‘will show that the quantity of heat discharged over the Atlantic from the waters of the Gulf Stream in a winter day would be sufficient to raise the whole column of atmosphere that rests upon France and the British Islands from the freezing point to summer heat. It is the influence of this stream upon climate,’ he adds, ‘that makes Erin the Emerald Isle of the sea, and clothes the shore of Albion with evergreen robes ; while, in the same latitude, on the other side, the shores of Labrador are fast bound in fetters of ice.’

Now, a depression beneath the sea of the North American continent would have the effect of depriving northern Europe of the benefits of this great heating current. Its origin has been traced to various causes,—some of them very inadequate ones. It has been said, for instance, that it is but a sort of oceanic prolongation of the Mississippi. It has been demonstrated, however, that it discharges through the Straits of Florida about a thousand times more water than the Mississippi does at its mouth ; and yet, even were the case otherwise, and the view correct, any great depression of North America would cut off the Mississippi from among the list of great rivers, by converting the valley which it occupies into a sea, and would thus terminate the