

and are now travelling slowly to the plains, still, however, a prey to frost and rain, sun and storm, and slowly breaking up into loose fragments as they descend.

Besides splitting solid rocks into separate blocks, frost disintegrates their surface, as the water contained between their particles freezes. This result, especially observable in tracts where there is abundant moisture in summer and great cold in winter, is familiarly seen in the pulverising of soil. Every one knows that when thaw comes after a long black frost, the country roads are often in as bad condition as after long rain or snow, the reason being that the frost, having separated the particles of the earth, has allowed the thawed moisture to mix thoroughly with them. Hence the value of a hard frost upon bare ploughed land. The soil is, as it were, ground down finer, new portions are added to it from the surface of stones which it may contain, and fresh mineral matter is thus provided for the rootlets of plants.