

which we more willingly bring forward, that, beside being highly important in itself, it forms an instance of adaptation in the pure and limited sense of the term*—even the influence of a circumstance strictly material on the state of the moral world in all the civilized, and indeed in all the appropriated countries on the face of the earth. We advert to the actual fertility of the land, and to the circumstances purely physical by which the degree or measure of that fertility is determined. It has been well stated by some of the expounders of geological science, that while the vegetable mould on the earth's surface is subject to perpetual waste, from the action both of the winds and of the waters, either blowing it away in dust, or washing it down in rivers to the ocean—the loss thus sustained is nevertheless perpetually repaired, by the operation of the same material agents on the uplands of the territory—whence the dust and the debris, produced by a disintegration that is constantly going on even in the hardest rocks, is either strewed by the atmosphere, or carried down in an enriching sediment by mountain streams to the lands which are beneath them. It has been rightly argued, as the evidence and example of a benevolent design, that the opposite causes of consumption and of supply are so adjusted to each other, as to have ensured the perpetuity of our

* See the first paragraphs of the Introductory Chapter.