

fragments of broken pebbles and sand, heaped together in apparently inextricable confusion. Yet such beds, dispersed as they are very generally over the surface of the regular strata, administer materially to the wants of man; in affording him the means of supplying himself readily with that important necessary of life, water.

From the irregularity in the form and size of the component parts of gravel, and from the slight degree of cohesion by which they are united, the whole mass is necessarily porous: and hence, readily transmitting the rain which falls on its surface, becomes charged with water to an extent proportional to the quantity of rain which has penetrated it; being enabled to retain the water thus accumulated, in consequence of its resting on some substratum, as clay, which is impermeable to water: so that, if an excavation sufficiently deep be made into any part of the gravel, the water immediately drains into this excavation, and rises at length to the level of the general mass of water contained in the whole bed; by which easy process, in such instances at least, those reservoirs, called wells, are formed: and these reservoirs are never exhausted, so long as the whole bed of gravel retains any considerable proportion of water. A very ready illustration of this fact is afforded by the familiar instance of those excavations which children are accustomed to make in the sand of the sea-