

general rule of *finite duration*. As all the geological states of which we find evidence in the present state of the earth, have had their termination, so also the astronomical conditions under which the revolutions of the earth itself proceed, involve the necessity of a future cessation of these revolutions.

The contemplative person may well be struck by this universal law of the creation. We are in the habit sometimes of contrasting the transient destiny of man with the permanence of the forests, the mountains, the ocean,—with the unwearied circuit of the sun. But this contrast is a delusion of our own imagination; the difference is after all but one of degree. The forest tree endures for its centuries and then decays; the mountains crumble and change, and perhaps subside in some convulsion of nature; the sea retires, and the shore ceases to resound with the “everlasting” voice of the ocean: such reflections have already crowded upon the mind of the geologist; and it now appears that the courses of the heavens themselves are not exempt from the universal law of decay; that not only the rocks and the mountains, but the sun and the moon have the sentence “to end” stamped upon their foreheads. They enjoy no privilege beyond man except a longer respite. The ephemeron perishes in an hour; man endures for his three score years and ten; an empire, a nation, numbers its centuries, it may be its thousands of years; the continents and islands which its dominion includes have perhaps their date, as those which preceded them have had; and the very revolutions of the sky by which centuries are numbered will at last languish and stand still.

To dwell on the moral and religious reflections suggested by this train of thought is not to our present purpose; but we may observe that it introduces a *homogeneity*, so to speak, into the government of the universe. Perpetual change, perpetual progression, increase and diminution, appear to be the rules of the material world, and to prevail without exception.