

miles above the previous sea-level. This quantity of water might be fairly calculated as amounting to eight times that of the seas and oceans of the globe, in addition to the quantity already existing. The questions then arise, Whence was this water derived; and how was it disposed of, after its purpose was answered? These questions may indeed be met, by saying that the water was created for the purpose, and then annihilated.—That Omnipotence could effect such a work, none can doubt: but we are not at liberty thus to invent miracles, and the narrative in the Book of Genesis plainly assigns two natural causes for the production of the diluvial water; the incessant rain of nearly six weeks, called in the Hebrew phrase the “windows of heaven,” that is, of the sky; and the “breaking up of all the fountains of the great deep.” By the latter phrase some have understood that there are immense reservoirs of water in the interior of the earth, or that even the whole of that interior, down to the centre, is a cavity filled with water; a notion which was excusable in the defective state of knowledge a century ago, but which, from the amplest evidence, we now know to be an impossibility. The use of this expression, in other parts of Scripture, sufficiently proves that it denotes the general collection of oceanic waters. It is scarcely needful to say, that all the rain which ever descends, has been previously raised, by evaporation, from the land and water that form the surface of the earth. The capacity of the atmosphere to absorb and sustain water is limited. Long before it reaches the point of saturation, change of temperature and electrical agency must produce copious descents of rain: from all the surface below, evaporation is still going on: and, were we to imagine the air to be first saturated to the utmost extent of its capacity, and then to discharge the whole quantity at once upon the earth, that whole quantity would bear a very inconsider-