

moving power ; and though it would appear, to the man who was ignorant of its properties, the least probable of all the attempts that have been made to obtain a power sufficient to counteract the impediments to motion resulting from natural causes, yet it is infinitely the most efficacious and controllable.

When rain falls upon the surface of the earth, it remains a short time, and disappears. It may have been thought by some unnecessary to investigate the cause, but the observer has satisfied himself with the supposition that it passes through the soil into the interior of the earth. There are, however, some strata through which the water cannot be filtered, strata which are impervious to its passage, and over their surface it passes as it would over a basin of oil. The rapid disappearance of the rain that falls on the earth cannot, therefore, in all cases, be attributed to the process of filtration, but is the result of that calorific influence of the solar rays, which, heating the surface of the earth, quietly carries away the redundant moisture as an invisible vapour.

The same process is in operation from the surface of all oceans, seas, and other masses of water ; were it not for this, the amazing body of water which the Mediterranean Sea, for example, receives of the many rivers and tributary streams that flow into it, would necessarily raise its level. But no such effect is produced ; there appears, on the other hand, to be a larger quantity evaporated from its surface than is carried into it by these rivers and streams, for there is a constant current of water rushing from the Atlantic, through the Straits of Gibraltar.

This is one of those wise provisions of the Creator, by which the continuance of vegetable and animal life is effected. But who, in the consideration of this phenomenon, or the almost analogous one of vapour rising from a boiling fluid, could ever imagine, from the knowledge of it, the application of steam as a moving power ?—yet the philosopher, by continued investigation, ascertains the laws of action and of change, and at last invents the steam-engine

The application of the steam-engine is scarcely less remarkable than its invention. It has relieved man of part of that curse which rests upon him ; “by the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.” It saws his timber, and forges his iron ; constructs the materials for his clothing, and grinds his corn, leaving him little more than a spectator of its marvel-