

CHAPTER XXI.

“He who, with pocket hammer, smites the edge
Of luckless rock or prominent stone, disguised
In weather stains, or crusted o’er by nature
With her first growths,—detaching by the stroke
A chip or splinter, to resolve his doubts;
And, with that ready answer satisfied,
The substance classes by some barbarous name,
And hurries on.”

WORDSWORTH.

In the course of my two visits to Miss Dunbar, I had several opportunities of examining the sand-wastes of Culbin, and of registering some of the peculiarities which distinguish the arenaceous sub-aerial formation from the arenaceous sub-aqueous deposit. Of the present surface of the earth, considerably more than six millions of square miles are occupied in Africa and Asia alone by sandy deserts. With but the interruption of the narrow valley of the Nile, an enormous zone of arid sand, full nine hundred miles across, stretches from the eastern coast of Africa to within a few days’ journey of the Chinese frontier: it is a belt that girdles nearly half the globe;—a vast “ocean,” according to the Moors, “without water.” The sandy deserts of the rainless district of Chili are also of great extent; and there are few countries in even the higher latitudes that have not their tracts of arenaceous waste. These sandy tracts, so common in the present scene of things, could