

the whole is, to countenance the doctrine of the metempsychosis, and the Pythagorean injunction of not eating animal food. It is clear, I think, that facts so introduced must be considered as having been contemplated rather in the spirit of poetry than of science.

We must estimate in the same manner, the very remarkable passage brought to light by M. Elie de Beaumont,⁵ from the Arabian writer, Kazwiri; in which we have a representation of the same spot of ground, as being, at successive intervals of five hundred years, a city, a sea, a desert, and again a city. This invention is adduced, I conceive, rather to feed the appetite of wonder, than to fix it upon any reality: as the title of his book, *The Marvels of Nature*, obviously intimates.

The speculations of Aristotle, concerning the exchanges of land and sea which take place in long periods, are not formed in exactly the same spirit, but they are hardly more substantial; and seem to be quite as arbitrary, since they are not confirmed by any examples and proofs. After stating,⁶ that the same spots of the earth are not always land and always water, he gives the reason. "The principle and cause of this is," he says, "that the inner parts of the earth, like the bodies of plants and animals, have their ages of vigor and of decline; but in plants and animals all the parts are in vigor, and all grow old, at once: in the earth different parts arrive at maturity at different times by the operation of cold and heat: they grow and decay on account of the sun and the revolution of the stars, and thus the parts of the earth acquire different power, so that for a certain time they remain moist, and then become dry and old: and then other places are revived, and become partially watery." We are, I conceive, doing no injustice to such speculations by classing them among *fanciful* geological opinions.

We must also, I conceive, range in the same division another class of writers of much more modern times;—I mean those who have framed their geology by interpretations of Scripture. I have already endeavored to show that such an attempt is a perversion of the purpose of a divine communication, and cannot lead to any physical truth. I do not here speak of geological speculations in which the Mosaic account of the deluge has been referred to; for whatever errors may have been committed on that subject, it would be as absurd to disregard the most ancient historical record, in attempting to trace back the history of the earth, as it would be, gratuitously to reject any other

⁵ *Ann. des Sc. Nat.* xxv. 380.

⁶ *Metcorol.* i. 14.