

easily wasted than that of the Oolite, its recession eastward was more rapid, and this process having gone on from that day to this, the two escarpments in the region across which the Thames runs are far distant from each other.

All this time the Thames was cutting a valley for itself in the Chalk, and by-and-by, when the escarpment had receded to a certain point, its base became in part lower than the edge of the Oolitic escarpment that then, as now, overlooked the valley of the Severn, only at that time the valley was narrower. While this point was being gradually reached, the Thames by degrees was joined by the growing tributary waters that drained part of the surface of the eastward slope of the Oolitic strata, the western escarpment of which was still receding; and thus was brought about, what at first sight seems the unnatural breaking of the river through the high escarpment of Chalk between Wallingford and Reading.

From the foregoing remarks it will be understood why the sources of the Thames, the Seven Springs and others, rise so close to the great escarpment of the Inferior Oolite, east of Gloucester and Cheltenham. But just as in times long gone, the sources of the Thames once rose westward of the Seven Springs, so well known on the Cotswolds, so the sources of the river now, are not more stationary than those that preceded. The escarpments, both of Chalk and Oolite, are still slowly changing and receding eastward; and as that of the Oolite recedes *the area of drainage will diminish and the Thames decrease in volume.* This is a geological fact, however distant it may appear to persons unaccustomed to deal with geological time