

tion, to equalize the diffusion of the water that is discharged upon it from the atmosphere! The truth of the proposition contained in those lines,

“ Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis, at ille

“ Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum,”

depends on the nature of the particular arrangement and character, to which allusion has just been made. On the one hand, the general surface of the land ascending from the sea on all sides towards some central ridge or district, called the watershed of the country, all the rain that does not sink beneath the surface is accumulated into rivers; which naturally descend towards, and ultimately reach, the sea: and, on the other hand, the superficial strata being in general incapable of immediately absorbing the rain which falls upon them, the descent of the water is the necessary result of the inclination of the surface. But if, from partial causes, such an inclination of the land is either wanting, or the course of rivers is impeded by the unrepressed growth of reeds and sedge, the adjoining district is overflowed, and at length converted into a stagnant marsh. It is from such a *physical* cause, that, at this moment, the ancient site of Babylon attests the truth of prophecy; being still, as it has been for ages, “ a possession “ for the bittern, and pools of water.”

But that which is called the watershed of any large tract of land is not simply the most ele-