vated portion of the whole surface: it consists also, in a greater or less degree, of ranges of mountains; down the highly inclined sides of which the rain immediately descends in numerous torrents, which by their gradual accumulation produce rivers. And, as best calculated to secure the permanent effect, the substance of these mountains is in general so hard, and impermeable to water, that, with reference to the present system of the earth, they may justly be characterised by the epithet "everlasting." But if, instead of being thus durable, they were of a soft or friable substance, they would soon cease to exist as mountains; and if they were porous, instead of compact, they would absorb much of that rain which now contributes to the formation of rivers.

From that portion of the rain which, in comparatively flat districts, sinks beneath the surface of the earth, reservoirs of water are formed: from which, either spontaneous springs arise, or into which, artificial excavations called *wells* are sunk: and of the utility of such reservoirs, those beds of gravel which occur in every part of the world afford upon the whole the best illustration.

SECT. V.

Beds of Gravel.

Few subjects would at the first view appear more barren of interest than a bed of gravel; consisting, as it usually does, of nothing but