

rets, to reflect that yonder were cultivated fields, that there grew trees, that here were even the dwellings of men, and that all has vanished.

If, then, our continents were as ancient as has been pretended, no traces of the habitation of men would appear on any part of the western bank of the Nile, which is exposed to this scourge of the sands of the desert. The existence, therefore, of such monuments attests the successive progress of the encroachments of the sand; and those parts of the bank, formerly inhabited, will for ever remain arid and waste. Thus the great population of Egypt, announced by the vast and numerous ruins of its cities, was in great part due to a cause of fertility which no longer exists, and to which sufficient attention has not been given. The sands of the desert were formerly remote from Egypt; the *Oases*, or habitable spots, still appearing in the midst of the sands, being the remains of the soils formerly extending the whole way to the Nile; but these sands, transported hither by the western winds, have overwhelmed and buried this extensive tract, and doomed to sterility a land which was once remarkable for its fruitfulness.

It is therefore not solely to her revolutions and changes of sovereigns that Egypt owes the loss of her ancient splendour; it is also to her having been thus irrecoverably deprived of a tract of land, by which, before the sands of the desert had covered it, and caused it to disappear, her wants had been abundantly supplied. Now, if we fix our attention on this fact, and reflect on the consequences which would have attended it if thousands, or only some hundreds, of centuries had elapsed since our continents first existed above the level of the