

of being is here spread out before the imagination, reaching immeasurably far into the depths of the eternity which is past, and into the eternity which is to come! What a field for the display of God's infinite perfections! What a vista does it open to us into the vast plans and purposes of Jehovah!

In the fourth place, geology reveals to us a curious series of improvements in the condition of worlds, as they pass through successive changes.

If the earth began its existence in the state of vapour, we can hardly imagine it in that state capable of sustaining any organic natures, formed upon the general type of those now existing. Nor, when the vapour was condensed into a molten globe, could such natures inhabit it, till a crust had formed over its surface, and the heat had been so reduced as not to decompose animals and plants. Even then, the natures placed upon it must have been of a peculiar and low type of organization, capable of enduring the high temperature and catastrophes which would destroy those of more delicate and complicated organization. But gradually did the temperature diminish while aqueous and atmospheric agencies were accumulating a deeper and a richer soil, so that the next change of inhabitants would allow natures of a higher organization and a denser population to occupy the surface. Their remains, buried in the earth, would increase the quantity of carbonate of lime in a form available for the use of animals and plants; that is, lime would gradually be eliminated, by plants and animals, from its more concealed combinations in the crystalline rocks, and be converted into carbonates, sulphates, and humates. A larger amount of organic matter would also be converted into humus. Now, limestone soils are of all others most favourable to vegetation, when there is a sufficient supply of organic matter. Hence every successive change becomes more and more adapted for animals and plants, because the lime and the organic matter in a state favourable for their support have been increasing; and the present state of the surface is more favourable than any conditions which have preceded it, and, accordingly, it is peopled with more perfect and more numerous organic natures. Can we doubt but that, if another change passes over the earth, this same great principle of progressive improvement will be manifested in the renovated world? I am not prepared to maintain, however, that this