

incessantly inwards through the Straits of Gibraltar, and yet the level within is not more than maintained. Were the Atlantic excluded, the inland sea would of course gradually dry up, until its area had so considerably lessened that its rivers would be of themselves sufficient to counterbalance its waste of surface; and were its rivers wanting, as might well be the case had it a Desert of Sahara on its northern, as on its southern side, even its profounder depths of more than a thousand fathoms would in time evaporate, and but enormous beds of salt remain behind. It seems not improbable, that the loose arenaceous materials of the New Red Sandstone may have existed, ere they formed an ocean bottom, as the incoherent sands of some geologic Sahara that encircled the inland seas and lagoons of this system, and that a consequent lack of rivers may have operated influentially in the formation of the salt. By the way, may not this process of separating huge deposits of this mineral from the sea,—a process which has been going on, we find, in every formation, from the Onondaga salt group of the Upper Silurian, as developed in the United States of America, down to the recent salt-lakes of the Asiatic basin,—be a provision in nature for preserving to the ocean its proper degree of density and saturation? In the natural course of things, the sea would necessarily be growing salter and heavier. The waves wash out of every shore, and receive from every river, minute supplies of salt, which evaporation has scarce any tendency to dissipate, and which, in the lapse of ages, would be necessarily accumulating in the waters, till the delicate gills and branchiæ of the various inmates, formed with reference to a rarer medium, would labor amid the dense and briny fluid, and their bodies, heretofore of a gravity exactly proportioned to that of their element, but now grown too light for it, would