

starch by the contraction or shrinkage, and consequent splitting, of the material in drying ; and resulting in those picturesque and singular landscape-features called basaltic colonnades : when brought up to day by sudden or gradual upheaval, and broken into cliffs and terraces by the action of waves, torrents, or weather. Those grand specimens of such colonnades which Britain possesses in the Giant's Causeway of Antrim, and the cave of Fingal in Staffa, for instance, are no doubt extreme outstanding portions of such a vast submarine lava-flood which at some inconceivably remote epoch occupied the whole intermediate space ; affording the same kind of evidence of a former connexion of the coasts of Scotland and Ireland as do the opposing chalk cliffs of Dover and Boulogne of the ancient connexion of France with Britain. Here and there a small basaltic island, such as that of Rathlin, remains to attest this former continuity, and to recall to the contemplative mind that sublime antagonism between sudden violence and persevering effort, which the study of geology impresses in every form of repetition.

(57.) There exists a very general impression that earthquakes are preceded and ushered in by some kind of preternatural, and, as it were, expectant calm in the elements ; as if to make the confusion and desolation they create the more impressive. The records of such visitations which we possess, however striking some particular cases of this kind may appear, by no means bear out this as a general fact, or go to indicate any particular phase of weather as preferentially accompanying their