

EPILOGUE.

HAVING considered the past history of the globe, we may now be permitted to bestow a glance upon the future which awaits it.

Can the actual state of the earth be considered as definitive? The revolutions which have fashioned its surface, and produced the Alps in Europe, Mount Ararat in Asia, the Cordilleras in the New World—are they to be the last? In a word, will the terrestrial sphere for ever preserve the form under which we know it—as it has been, so to speak, impressed on our memories by the maps of the geographers?

It is difficult to reply with any confidence to this question; nevertheless, our readers will not object to accompany us a step further, while we express an opinion, founded on analogy and scientific induction.

What are the causes which have produced the present inequalities of the globe—the mountain-ranges, continents, and waters? The primordial cause is, as we have had frequent occasion to repeat, the cooling of the earth, and the progressive solidification of the external crust, the nucleus of which still remains in a fluid or viscous state. These have produced the contortions, furrows, and fractures which have led to the elevation of the great mountain-ranges and the depression of the great valleys—which have caused some continents to emerge from the bed of ocean and have submerged others. The secondary causes which have contributed to the formation of a vast extent of dry land are due to the sedimentary deposits, which have resulted in the creation of new continents by filling up the basins of the ancient seas.

Now these two causes, although in a minor degree, continue in operation to the present day. The thickness of the terrestrial crust is only a small fraction compared to that of the internal liquid mass. The principal cause, then, of the great dislocations of the earth's crust is, so to speak, at our gates; it threatens us unceasingly. Of this the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, which are still frequent in our