

and inanimate nature. He has ameliorated the climate, and by so doing has affected the agencies of waste that are wearing down the surface of the land. The rivers are now, probably, a good deal less in size than they were even in the days of the Romans, and there may be fewer runnels and streamlets. The old mosses acted as vast sponges, collecting the rain that fell upon them or soaked into them from the neighbouring slopes, and feeding with a constant supply the brown peaty rivulets that carried their surplus waters to the lower grounds. The evaporation from these wide swampy flats could not but be extensive, and the rainfall was thus, in all likelihood, proportionately great. But the clearing away of the forests and of the peat-mosses has removed one chief source alike of the rivulets and of the rain. The amount of denudation by the combined influence of rain and streams might accordingly be supposed to be less, on the whole, than it was eighteen hundred years ago. But we must bear in mind that the extent to which draining has now been carried all over the country has had the effect of allowing the rain to run off more easily into the rivers, which consequently swell and fall again more rapidly than they used to do. Floods or 'spates,' though the rainfall may be the same or less, have thus a tendency to be more sudden and violent than formerly, and hence the increased amount of erosion performed by rivers in flood may be more than an equivalent for the diminution of their ordinary state.

Among the plants and animals of the country, too, traces of the influence of man's interference are everywhere apparent. He has altered the character of the vegetation over wide districts, driving away plants of one kind, such as the heaths, to put in their stead those of another type, like the cereals, thus materially modifying the aspect of the country. The gradual change of climate superinduced by him must also