

THE DESTINY OF THE EARTH.

WILL THE MOUNTAINS BE LEVELLED?

BY PROF. ALEXANDER WINCHELL, LL.D.

LET us take a glance at the labours of water in levelling the inequalities which ancient volcanic energy had long ago created upon the surface of our planet. Throughout the whole extent of the circumambient sea the tireless surge is gnawing at the rock-bound shore, and mouthful by mouthful the continents and the islands are being swallowed up. The sediment which every summer shower washes down the hill-side is so much material taken from the hill-top and deposited in the valley. The deep mould of the alluvial flat is made up of the spoils of the adjacent declivities. By as much as the valley is raised, the hills are lowered. The turbid waters of a winter stream are hurrying off with a freight of sediment stolen from a hundred townships. The mud which settles in my glass of river water upon a Mississippi steam-boat is a mouthful of the Rocky Mountains—or perchance of the Alleghanies. From month to month, and from year to year, and from age to age, this stately river is floating off the land—not noisily, but sullenly and angrily, as if the waters had some great wrong to avenge upon the land. And all these filchings from the mountain and the plain are restored again to the sea. Old Ocean is receiving back his own. The rivers are his allies, and right faithfully do they forage to supply the cravings of his insatiate maw.

We witness such work in progress during the brief moment of our tarry upon the earth. We look back along this line of operations, and discern for the first time the gigantic results which have already been achieved by the wearing agency of waters. Not during the lifetime of Adam's race alone, but during the age of quadrupeds which preceded him—through the dynasty of reptiles, still more ancient, have these denuding forces been ceaselessly engaged in scraping, and gouging, and scarring the face of Nature. River-beds have been deeply excavated and again obliterated by a plethora of rubbish poured forward by some more gigantic operation. Lake basins have been scooped out—Niagara gorges dug—square miles of land, with its underlying rocky floors, have been swept away. From the lofty summits of the noted Catskill Mountains the Old Red Sandstone once stretched eastward perhaps to Massachusetts Bay, the powers