

and present a scene of desolation. The springs and rivers of the plains always flow over a pebbly bed, never over a muddy one; the waters are capricious, and often intermittent, appearing and disappearing from the soil, to appear and lose themselves again; many alter their course, or cease to flow altogether, while others suddenly rise in the midst of a desert land.

“On the other hand, the soil of these regions is often covered with agate, jasper, chalcedony, petrified trees, and masses of arenaceous lava, which, descending from the hills, absorb the water of creeks and their sources, fill up the beds of streams, and render lands barren and dry which at one time were watered and fertile.

“When these phenomena take place, the people that dwell in the country are naturally compelled to flee from these newly-made deserts, which become the abodes of sickness, famine, and death, and go to seek a more favored land. These compulsory emigrations must have been frequent, to judge from the traces the population have left behind, notwithstanding the ranks of the emigrants must have been fearfully thinned by exposure, hardships, and misery.

“If to all these natural causes of dissolution are added intestine war, the difficulty of forming new establishments, the decline of Montezuma's dominion, and its complete annihilation under the Spanish sway, it does not appear necessary to invent a different nation to account for the works of art