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ON THE THEORY OF IGNEOUS ROCKS AND VOLCANOS.

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In a note in the American Journal of Science for January, 1858, I have ventured to put forward some speculations upon the chemistry of a cooling globe, such as the igneous theory supposes our earth to have been at an early period. Considering only the crust with which geology makes us acquainted, and the liquid and gaseous elements which now surround it, I have endeavored to show that we may attain to some idea of the chemical conditions of the cooling mass by conceiving these materials to again re-act upon each other under the influence of an intense heat. The quartz, which is present in such a great proportion in many rocks, would decompose the carbonates and sulphates, and aided by the presence of water, the chlorids both of the rocky strata and the sea, while the organic matters and the fossil carbon would be burned by the atmospheric oxygen. From these reactions would result a fused mass of silicates of alumina, alkalies, lime, magnesia, iron, etc., while all the carbon, sulphur and chlorine, in the form of acid gases, mixed with watery vapour, azote, and a probable excess of oxygen; would form an exceedingly dense atmosphere. When the cooling permitted condensation, an acid rain would fall upon the heated crust of the earth, decomposing the silicates, and giving rise to chlorids and sulphates of the various bases, while the separated silica would probably take the form of crystalline quartz.

In the next stage, the portions of the primitive crust not covered by the ocean, undergo a decomposition under the influence of the hot