

solid form from the water of the ocean itself. All these depositions may be spread over the bottom of the sea in successive layers or strata. They may be hardened by long-continued pressure into the consistency of stone. There may have been thousands of shells imbedded in them—and what is more, the form even of the softer fishes may be retained in petrification; and handed down to the observation of very distant ages.

7. All this may be going on in the vast and inaccessible solitudes of the deep—but how can the vestiges of such a process ever be submitted to actual observation? The ocean may change its place. There are known causes perfectly competent to the production of such an effect. What is now dry land may be submerged—and the deserted bed of the ocean may come to be inhabited by land animals. By an exercise of creative power the sea may be stocked with new generations, adapted to the last changes which its waters have undergone—and by another exercise of creative power, the new land which has been formed may also be peopled with living beings. If there be a rational being among the last like man, he might observe the traces of that process which took place in the last era of the history of the globe. He might learn from the vestiges of marine animals firmly imbedded in the stratified rock, that the ground he is now treading upon was at one time covered with the waters of the sea—and by comparing specimens extracted from the fossil productions around him with the fishes of the present ocean, he might come to the wonderful