

“ We see then why the Ocean has abandoned the highest mountains on which it has left incontestable marks of its former abode. We see why the animals and plants of the south may be transported into the climates of the north, where their relics and impressions are still to be found—lastly, it explains the short period of the existence of the moral world—whose earliest monuments do not go much farther back than three thousand years. The human race reduced to a small number of individuals in the most deplorable state, occupied only with the immediate care of their subsistence, must necessarily have lost the remembrance of all sciences and of every art; and when the progress of civilization has again created new wants, every thing was to be done again as if man had been just placed upon the Earth. But whatever may be the cause assigned by philosophers to these phenomena—we may be perfectly at ease with respect to such a catastrophe during the short period of human life.”

14. We may now understand what is meant by a formation. There is a formation going on just now at the bottom of our present ocean by those muddy depositions which are brought to it from all the rivers; and which, laid the one over the other, will form, it is supposed, the strata of a new continent. Mixed up with this there must be a constant accumulation going on both of shells and skeletons—and from the bony parts of the numerous and rapid generations by which the sea is peopled, there must accrue a perpetual addition to the solid materials of that deposit, which, by