

and islands are tenanted by about seventeen hundred species of mammalia, of which only forty-six are marsupial, namely, the opossums of North and South America. But the great difference of age of the strata in each of these three localities seems to indicate the predominance throughout a vast lapse of time, (from the era of the Upper Trias to that of the Purbeck beds,) of a low grade of quadrupeds; and this persistency of similar generic and ordinal types in Europe while the species were changing, and while the fish, reptiles, and mollusca were undergoing vast modifications, raises a strong presumption that there was also a vast extension in space of the same marsupial forms during that portion of the secondary epoch which has been termed 'the age of reptiles.'

As to the class Reptilia, some of the orders which prevailed when the secondary rocks were formed are confessedly much higher in their organisation than any of the same class now living. If the less perfect ophidians, or snakes, which now abound on the earth had taken the lead in those ancient days among the land reptiles, and the Deinosaurs had been contemporary with Man, there can be no doubt that the progressionist would have seized upon this fact with unfeigned satisfaction as confirmatory of his views. Now that the order of succession is precisely reversed, and that the age of the *Iguanodon* was long anterior to that of the *Eocene palæophis* and living *boa*, while the crocodile is in our own times the highest representative of its class, a retrograde movement in this important division of the vertebrata must be admitted. It may perhaps be accounted for by the power acquired by the placental mammalia, when they became dominant, a power before which the class of vertebrata next below them, as coming most directly in competition with them, may, more than any other, have given way.

For no less than thirty-four years it had been a received