

phorus, it might be converted into a fresh lake, if the supply of river water were sufficient to overbalance evaporation and secure an overflow. At present a great body of salt water is constantly being poured out through the Bosphorus, and its place taken by the fresh water of rivers. Owing, however, to the uncongenial quality of the freshening water, some of the Black Sea shells are strangely distorted, as shown by Edward Forbes.

Or if we take the Caspian alone as an example, we have an inland brackish sheet of water, with a present area of 178,866 square miles, the surface of which is 83 feet below the level of the Black Sea. This, according to accepted zoological and physical views, was once united by a narrow strait with the North Sea. Changes in physical geography have taken place of such a kind that the Caspian is now disunited from the ocean, while its waters are still inhabited by a poor and dwarfed marine molluscan fauna, and by seals. If by increase of rainfall the Caspian became freshened, the loss of water by evaporation not being equal to supply, it would by-and-by, after reaching the point of overflow, be converted into a great fresh-water lake, larger in extent than the whole area now occupied by the British Islands and the Irish Sea. It is even conceivable that the great area of inland drainage of Central Asia, now holding many salt lakes, might in the same manner be so changed that all its lakes would become fresh and widened in extent, thus occupying areas larger than all the Old Red Sandstone of Europe. Under these circumstances, in the Caspian area we should have a passage more or less gradual from imperfect marine to perfectly fresh-water conditions, such as I conceive to have marked the advent of the Old Red Sandstone. When the whole area was fairly separated from the sea,