

Here were banks of polyp corals—each little creature planted in his cup and expanding his petal-like tentacles in the life-giving sunlight. Over this slope of animated stone crawled lazy sea-snails grazing on the tentacled growths then beginning a work of coral-building which the Florida reefs witness still in progress.

The cycles of Cambrian and Silurian time swept on and came to an end. The history of life showed no departure from the fundamental types with which that history was inaugurated. There were new species, new genera, some new families, scarcely a new order or class. The changes were so slow that the world seemed finished, and finished for these happy creatures that held possession of it. Yet an occasional visitor from another world would have noted changes. The Cordilleran Land had sunken step by step, and was even now reduced to an archipelago. The Great Northern Land, on the contrary, had risen step by step, till its southern limits extended from Albany to Syracuse and Buffalo, and thence to Detroit, Mackinac, Milwaukee, and Chicago. North of this line lay the continental surface. A great island stretched perhaps, from Sandusky to central Kentucky. These lands were the empire of silence and desolation. Populous as were the waters, here was no motion or sound of animated creature. Sparse, dwarf tree-growths fringed the bleak horizon, but flower and fruit, grass and herb, were yet unknown. The sea, always jealous of the conquests made from his domain continued to growl around the borders of the land, and pursued industriously the work of reclamation of his ancient slime. The wandering winds finding no fertile isle to fan or sail to waft, confederated with the destroying waves wreaked their anger on the crumbling shores and howled sullenly through the vistas of the sparsely wooded plain.