

species, and even their genera, changed with the strata; and, although the same species occasionally recur at small distances, it may be announced as a general truth, that the shells of the ancient strata have forms peculiar to themselves; that they gradually disappear, so as no longer to be seen at all in the recent strata, and still less in the presently existing ocean, in which their corresponding species are never discovered, and where several, even of their genera, do not occur: that, on the contrary, the shells of the recent strata are similar, in respect to their genera, to those which exist in our seas; and that, in the latest and least consolidated of these strata, and in certain recent and limited deposits, there are some species which the most experienced eye could not distinguish from those which are found in the neighbouring seas.

There has, therefore, been a succession of variations in the economy of organic nature, which has been occasioned by those of the fluid in which the animals lived, or which has at least corresponded with them; and these variations have gradually conducted the classes of aquatic animals to their present state, till, at length, at the time when the sea retired from our continents for the last time, its inhabitants did not differ much from those which are found in it at the present day.