

statements made with respect to the upraised organic remains, we must feel astonished at the vastness of the areas, which have suffered changes in level either downward or upward, within a period not geologically remote. It would appear, also, that the elevatory and subsiding movements follow nearly the same laws. Throughout the spaces interspersed with atolls, where not a single peak of high land has been left above the level of the sea, the sinking must have been immense in amount. The sinking, moreover, whether continuous, or recurrent with intervals sufficiently long for the corals again to bring up their living edifices to the surface, must necessarily have been extremely slow. This conclusion is probably the most important one which can be deduced from the study of coral formations; and it is one which it is difficult to imagine how otherwise could ever have been arrived at. Nor can I quite pass over the probability of the former existence of large archipelagoes of lofty islands, where now only rings of coral-rock scarcely break the open expanse of the sea, throwing some light on the distribution of the inhabitants of the other high islands, now left standing so immensely remote from each other in the midst of the great oceans. The reef-constructing corals have indeed reared and preserved wonderful memorials of the subterranean oscillations of level; we see in each barrier-reef a proof that the land has there subsided, and in each atoll a monument over an island now lost. We may thus, like unto a geologist who had lived his ten thousand years and kept a record of the passing changes, gain some insight into the great system by which the surface of this globe has been broken up, and land and water interchanged.