

there was one or five, or a greater number of languages, he may answer that, before he can reply to such a question, it must be decided whether the origin of Man was single, or whether there were many primordial races. But he may also observe, that if mankind began their career in a rude state of society, their whole vocabulary would be limited to a few words, and that if they then separated into several isolated communities, each of these would soon acquire an entirely distinct language, some roots being lost and others corrupted and transformed beyond the possibility of subsequent identification, so that it might be hopeless to expect to trace back the living and dead languages to one starting point, even if that point were of much more modern date than we have now good reason to suppose. In like manner it may be said of species, that if those first formed were of very simple structure, and they began to vary and to lose some organs by disuse and acquire new ones by development, they might soon differ as much as so many distinctly created primordial types. It would therefore be a waste of time to speculate on the number of original monads or germs from which all plants and animals were subsequently evolved, more especially as the oldest fossiliferous strata known to us may be the last of a long series of antecedent formations, which once contained organic remains. It was not till geologists ceased to discuss the condition of the original nucleus of the planet, whether it was solid or fluid, and whether it owed its fluidity to aqueous or igneous causes, that they began to achieve their great triumphs ; and the vast progress which has recently been made in showing how the living species may be connected with the extinct by a common bond of descent, has been due to a more careful study of the actual state of the living world, and to those monuments of the past in which the relics of the animate creation of former ages are best preserved and least mutilated by the hand of time.