

than in others where their relics were found much less plentifully. The explanation of the abundance of their remains was supplied by their varied condition of decay and preservation. Some were comparatively fresh, others had greatly decayed, and were incrustated with or even completely buried in a deposit of earthy manganese. Yet the same cast of the dredge brought up these different stages of decay from the same surface of the sea-floor. While generation after generation of sea-creatures drops its bones to the bottom, now here, now there, so exceedingly feeble is the rate of deposit of sediment that they lie uncovered, mayhap for centuries, so that the remains which sink to-day may lie side by side with the mouldered and incrustated bones that found their way to the bottom hundreds of years ago.

Another striking indication of the very slow rate at which sedimentation takes place in these abysses has also been brought to notice by Mr. Murray. In the clay from the bottom he found numerous minute spherical granules of native iron, which, as he suggests, are almost certainly of meteoric origin — fragments of those falling stars which, coming to us from planetary space, burst into fragments when they rush into the denser layers of our atmosphere. In tracts where the growth of silt upon the sea-floor is excessively tardy, the fine particles, scattered by the dissipation of these meteorites, may remain in appreciable quantity. In this case, again, it is not needful to suppose that meteorites have disappeared over these ocean depths more numerous than over other parts of the earth's surface. The iron granules have no doubt been as plentifully showered down elsewhere, though they cannot be so readily detected in accumulating sediment. I know no recent observation in physical geography more calculated to impress deeply the imagination than the testimony of this