

34 *Aristotle on Geological Revolutions*

conclusion that the temple of Jupiter Ammon was once near the sea, which then spread over Egypt as far as the marshes, near Pelusium, Mount Casius and the Lake Sirbonis. He speaks of salt being dug in his time in Egypt under layers of sand mingled with shells, as if the whole region had formerly been covered by a shallow sea that stretched across to the Arabian Gulf.¹

No writer of antiquity has expressed himself more philosophically than Aristotle regarding the past vicissitudes of the earth's surface. Having studied so carefully the operations of the various agents that are now modifying that surface, he recognised how greatly the aspect of the land must have been transformed in the course of ages. His remarks on this subject have a strikingly modern tone. He contemplates the alternations of land and sea and furnishes illustrations of them, much as a geologist of to-day may do. "The sea," he says, "now covers tracts that were formerly dry land, and land will one day reappear where we now find sea. We must look on these mutations as following each other in a certain order, and with a certain periodicity, seeing that the interior of the globe, like the bodies of animals and plants, has its periods of vigour and decline, with this dif-

¹ *Loc. cit.* Strabo narrates his own experience as to fossils in the rocks of Egypt. When standing in front of the Pyramids he noticed that the blocks of stone that had been brought from the quarries contained pieces which in shape and size resembled lentils (*nummulites*) and he was told that these were remnants of the food of the workmen turned into stone—an explanation which he rejects as improbable, though he cannot suggest a likely origin for them. xvii. i. 34.