

great depth, but horizontal strata composed of substances more or less varied, and containing almost all of them innumerable marine productions. Similar strata, with the same kind of productions, compose the lesser hills to a considerable height. Sometimes the shells are so numerous as to constitute of themselves the entire mass of the rock ; they rise to elevations superior to the level of every part of the ocean, and are found in places where no sea could have carried them at the present day, under any circumstances ; they are not only enveloped in loose sand, but are often inclosed in the hardest rocks. Every part of the earth, every hemisphere, every continent, every island of any extent, exhibits the same phenomenon.

The times are past when ignorance could maintain, that these remains of organized bodies are mere sportings of nature, productions generated in the womb of the Earth, by its own creative powers ; and the efforts made by some metaphysicians of the present day, will not probably succeed in bringing these exploded opinions again into repute. A scrupulous comparison of the forms of these remains, of their texture, and often even of their chemical composition, does not disclose the slightest difference between the fossil shells and those which still inhabit the sea : the preservation of the former is not less perfect than that of the latter ; most commonly we neither observe