

up to pour down another ocean. He who reflects on the devastation caused by earthquakes, inundations and the fall of mountains, even though they are merely local appearances confined to particular quarters, cannot help putting the question to himself, how the order, regularity and connection exhibited by strata of rocks, could in any measure exist, if the same or similar accidents had happened throughout the whole world, and if mechanical power had operated with such energy, and to such an extent? All our knowledge of the structure of the earth, and of the existence of its inhabitants, declares rather a quiet uninterrupted and continually progressive advancement in its formation and development.

In the lapse of geological epochs, we observe a gradation of rock formations following one another, in which the latter, however remotely connected, still appear sufficiently similar to the earlier to indicate a common origin, till they at length terminate in simple formations, resembling those which are presently taking place. When the precipitates were exhausted, and the structure was completed, nay, even earlier, its destruction commenced; not that violent destruction by which lofty mountains are torn asunder and levelled, no uproar of nature, no gigantic struggle of the elements, such as we commonly conceive, but a decomposition of the strata of rocks to a greater or less depth, caused partly by chemical, partly by mechanical, but slow operating powers, what they wanted in intensity being compensated by the endurance of their operation. According to the common law of nature, deficiency of power is supplied by duration of time; for, of all the oracles which have been consulted