

organization are found in almost every sedimentary deposit, whatever may be its nature, yet they occur far more abundantly, and in a better state of preservation in some strata than in others: nor are they equally distributed throughout the same bed, but are heaped together in particular localities, and occur but sparingly, or are altogether absent in other layers of the same rock. Neither are the remains of the same kinds of animals and plants found indiscriminately in strata of different ages: on the contrary many species are restricted to the most ancient, others to the most recent formations; while some genera range through the entire series of rocks, and also appear as denizens of the existing lands and seas. Hence organic remains acquire a high degree of importance, not only from the intrinsic interest which they possess as objects of natural history, but also for the light they shed on the physical condition of our planet in the most remote ages; and for the invaluable data they afford as chronometers of the successive revolutions which the surface of the earth has undergone.

They have been eloquently and appropriately termed the *MEDALS OF CREATION*; for as an accomplished numismatist, even when the inscription of an ancient and unknown coin is illegible, can from the half-obliterated characters, and from the style of art, determine with precision the people by whom, and the period when it was struck; in like manner the geologist can decipher these natural memorials,