

Eocene tribes. Another change is again perceived, when we investigate the fossils of still later periods. But in this succession of quadrupeds we cannot detect any signs of a progressive development of organization,—any clear indication that the Eocene fauna was less perfect than the Miocene, or the Miocene than that of the Older or Newer Pliocene periods.

Recent origin of man.—If, then, the popular theory of the successive development of the animal and vegetable world, from the simplest to the most perfect forms, rests on a very insecure foundation; it may be asked, whether the recent origin of man lends any support to the same doctrine, or how far the influence of man may be considered as such a deviation from the analogy of the order of things previously established, as to weaken our confidence in the uniformity of the course of nature.

I need not dwell on the proofs of the low antiquity of our species, for it is not controverted by any experienced geologist; indeed the real difficulty consists in tracing back the signs of man's existence on the earth to that comparatively modern period when species, now his contemporaries, began greatly to predominate. If there be a difference of opinion respecting the occurrence in certain deposits of the remains of man and his works, it is always in reference to strata confessedly of the most modern order; and it is never pretended that our race co-existed with assemblages of animals and plants, of which *all or even a large proportion of the species* are extinct. From the concurrent testimony of history and tradition, we learn that parts of Europe, now the most fertile and most completely subjected to the dominion of man, were, less than three thousand years ago, covered with forests, and the abode of wild beasts. The archives of nature are in perfect accordance with historical records; and when we lay open the most superficial covering of peat, we sometimes find therein the canoes of the savage, together with huge antlers of the wild stag, or horns of the wild bull. In caves now open to the day in various parts of Europe, the bones of large beasts of prey occur in abundance; and they indicate that, at periods comparatively modern in the history of the globe, the ascendancy of man, if he existed at all, had scarcely been felt by the brutes.*

No inhabitant of the land exposes himself to so many dangers on the waters as man, whether in a savage or a civilized state†; and there is no animal, therefore, whose skeleton is so liable to become imbedded in lacustrine or submarine deposits: nor can it be said that his remains are more perishable than those of other animals; for in ancient fields of battle, as Cuvier has observed, the bones of men have suffered as little decomposition as those of horses which were buried in the same grave.‡ But even if the more solid parts of our species had disappeared, the impression of their form would have remained engraven on the rocks, as have the traces of the

* Respecting the probable antiquity assignable to certain human bones and works of art found intermixed with re-

mains of extinct animals in several caves in France, see ch. 47.

† See ch. 49.

‡ Ibid.