

ter (vol. i. p. 365). But the *post glacial period*, or the more recent diluvial period, during which the temperature again increased and the ice retreated towards the poles, was also highly important in regard to the present state of chorological relations.

The biological characteristic of the quaternary epoch lies essentially in the development and dispersion of the human organism and his culture. Man has acted with a greater transforming, destructive, and modifying influence upon the animal and vegetable population of the earth than any other organism. For this reason, and not because we assign to man a privileged exceptional position in nature in other matters, we may with full justice designate the development of man and his civilization as the beginning of a special and last main division of the organic history of the earth. It is probable indeed that the corporeal development of primæval man out of man-like apes took place as far back as the earlier pliocene period, perhaps even in the miocene tertiary period. But the actual development of *human speech*, which we look upon as the most powerful agency in the development of the peculiar characteristics of man and his dominion over other organisms, probably belongs to that period which on geological grounds is distinguished from the preceding pliocene period as the pleistocene or diluvial. In fact the time which has elapsed from the development of human speech down to the present day, though it may comprise many thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, almost vanishes into nothing as compared with the immeasurable length of the periods which have passed from the beginning of organic life on the earth down to the origin of the human race.