

of Julius Cæsar could not be distinguished by any fossil tests from those laid down in the days of Victoria, unless, indeed, traces of human implements were obtainable whereby the progress of civilization during 2000 years might be indicated. So far as regards the shells, bones, and plants preserved in the various formations, it would be absolutely impossible to discriminate their relative dates; they would be classed as "geologically contemporaneous," that is, as having been formed during the same period in the history of life in the European area; yet there might be a difference of 2000 years or more between many of them. Strict contemporaneity cannot be asserted of any strata merely on the ground of similarity or identity in fossils.

But the phrase "geologically contemporaneous" is too vague to have any chronological value except in a relative sense. To speak of two formations as "contemporaneous," which may have been separated by thousands of years, seems rather a misuse of language, though the phraseology has now gained such a footing in geological literature as probably to be inexpugnable. If we turn again for suggestions to the existing distribution of life on the earth (though it is probable that formerly, and particularly among the earlier geological periods, there was considerably greater uniformity in zoological distribution than there is now), we learn that similarity or identity of species and genera holds good, on the whole, only for limited areas, and consequently, if applied to wide geographical regions, ought to be an argument for diversity rather than for similarity of age. If we suppose the British seas to be raised into dry land, so that the organic relics, preserved in their sands and silts, could be exhumed and examined, a general type or common facies would be found, though some species