lations of previous students of Natural History, so far as they had any bearing on his quest. What is spoken of as the ladder of life had been frequently commented on,—the gradations of structure from simple forms, at the bottom, to complex ones at the top, as seen in living things, and of their relations to one another,—Algae, nearly allied to Lichens, Lichens to Fungi, Fungi to Hepaticae, Hepaticae to Mosses, Mosses to Ferns, and then the series of Phænogams, leading up to the Compositae.

Similarly animal life begins with the Amœba and ascends to man.

It has been observed before his day that large groups of species of widely different habits present the same fundamental plan of structure,—all the vertebrates, for instance,—and that parts of the same animal or plant, the functions of which are very different, likewise exhibit modifications of a common plan.

The existence of structures in a rudimentary and apparently useless condition, in one species of a group, which are fully developed and have definite functions in other species of the same group,—the flaps of seals and whales,—had been dwelt on. The modifications produced on living organisms when placed in new conditions, and the effects resulting from Geographic Distribution, were facts well known. And specially the revelations of palæontology, showing a succession of life, simpler in the older rocks, and more complicated as we examine the more recent formations, were highly suggestive. Familiar with all these facts, the enquiring mind of Darwin felt that the universe held in its bosom profound secrets which had not yet been brought to light, and he determined to fathom them so far as it was within the power of man to do so.

All his subsequent publications took their colour from his views as to the origin of species, and their general aim was to show the singular endowments possessed by plants and animals, in some regards equal to the