hill is capped with basalt.* It is principally composed of argillaceous and calcareous strata, with beds of a cream-coloured fissile limestone, which readily separates into laminæ of moderate thickness, and abounds in fishes in the most beautiful state of preservation. They are all compressed flat, but the scales, bones, and fins remain; their colour is a deep brown, thus admirably contrasting with the limestone in which they are imbedded. Several hundred distinct species are supposed to be contained in these quarries, and thousands of specimens have been collected; according to M. Agassiz, all the species, though related to the recent, are extinct. From the immense quantities which occur in so limited an area, it seems probable that the limestone in which they are imbedded was erupted into the ocean in a fluid state by volcanic agency; and that the fishes were thus suffocated, and surrounded by the calcareous mass. Nor is this hypothesis without support, for on the appearance of a volcanic island in the Mediterranean, a few years since, hundreds of dead fishes were seen putrid and floating in the waters; and it cannot be doubted that shoals of fishes might at the same time have been enveloped in the volcanic matter at the bottom of the sea, and become compressed and preserved; when the mud which envelopes them is consolidated, and the bed of the Mediterranean elevated above the waters,

* Organic Remains of a Former World, vol. iii. p. 247.