

were covered in one portion of the globe, mountains of similar altitude must have been equally covered in every other portion of it.

The inference here seems to be founded on a common but altogether mistaken view of some of the grandest operations of nature with which modern science has brought us acquainted. It has been well remarked, that when two opposing explanations of extraordinary natural phenomena are given,—one of a simple and seemingly common-sense character, the other complex and apparently absurd,—it is almost always safer to adopt the apparently absurd than the seemingly common-sense one. Dr Kitto's "plain man," yielding to the dictates of what he would deem common sense,—which, of course, in questions of natural science, is tantamount to common nonsense,—would be sure to go wrong. And we find the remark not inaptly illustrated by the now well-established fact, that while the medium level of the ocean is one of the most fixed lines in nature, the level of the great continents, with their table-lands and mountains, is an ever-fluctuating line. It may seem strange that land should be less stable than water. We see the tide rising and falling twice every twenty-four hours, and the rock ever remaining in its place ;—we speak of the fixed earth and the unstable sea. And yet, while we have no evidence whatever that the sea-level has changed during at least the ages of the Tertiary formations, and absolutely know that it could not have varied more than a few yards, or at most a few fathoms, we have direct evidence that during that time great mountain chains, many thousand feet in height, such as the Alps, have arisen from the bottom of the ocean, and that great continents have sunk beneath it and disappeared. The larger part of northern Europe and America have been covered by the sea since our present group of shells began to exist ; and it seems not improbable that the lower portion of the valley of