

Eventually we began to hear the sound of clinking hammers, and then in the dim distance we saw little lights moving to and fro. The sounds ceased as we approached, and the lights drew nearer, until we found ourselves in the centre of a group of begrimed workmen, which increased in numbers every moment as the men hurried from different parts of the workings to be out of the way of an impending blast.

They gathered round us, and examined our hammers as well as the specimens we had procured. One fossil had especially puzzled us, which we now submitted to the decision of our subterranean acquaintances. One of them—styled by his comrades “the Philosopher,” a tall, wiry, young man—took the stone, and after eyeing it gravely for a few seconds, pronounced it to be an oyster-shell. I could see no resemblance on which to found such a decision; but the dictum of “Lang Willie” seemed to settle the matter finally in the eyes of the quarrymen. Seating himself on a large prostrate block of limestone, and stuffing his short pipe into his pocket, he proceeded to point out to the company the evidence that the scene of their labours had once been under the sea. There was the oyster-shell to begin with. Surely none of us could dispute that oysters only lived in the sea, and therefore, as the oyster occurred in the quarry, the quarry must once have formed part of the sea-bottom? Then there were the scales, bones, and teeth of fishes, very much longer than trout or any “siclike” fresh-water fish, and these must have dwelt in the sea. Besides this, he sometimes noticed a white powder crusting the rock like a sprinkling of salt, and the stone had occasionally what Trinculo would have called “an ancient and fishlike smell,” that to Willie’s mind clearly bespoke the former presence of the sea. All this and