

time immemorial had regarded volcanic action as arising from the combustion of inflammable materials in the crust of the earth, much difficulty and divergence of opinion existed respecting the active cause that set these materials on fire. Lister's suggestion had the merit of being a *vera causa*, from which undoubtedly the spontaneous combustion of carbonaceous strata has often arisen.

To geologists perhaps not the least memorable of Lister's contributions to the progress of science was a proposal made by him for the first time for the construction of what we now call geological maps. This subject will be more particularly referred to in Chapter XIV.

Robert Plot in his *Natural History of Oxfordshire* (1677) described Nature's "extravagancies and defects, occasioned either by the exuberance of matter or obstinacy of impediments, as in monsters; and then lastly as she is restrained, forced, fashioned or determined by artificial operations." Though he gave a map and sixteen beautifully engraved plates which included representations of fossils, he stated seven reasons for rejecting the idea that the fossils "owed their form and figure to the shells of the fishes they represent" and for concluding that these objects or "formed stones" must be regarded as "*lapides sui generis*, naturally produced by some extraordinary plastic virtue, latent in the earth, or quarries where they are found."¹

With these writers may here be included the Celtic scholar and antiquary, Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709) who

¹ *Op. cit.* 2nd Edit. (1705), p. 112.