

this subject have not prevailed, till recent times ; though some remarkable glimpses of the truth, and indeed more than glimpses, are to be found in the fragmentary remains of oriental and Egyptian Antiquity, and more completely in the doctrines of Pythagoras and of other illustrious men who followed him at long intervals. Strabo, the Grecian philosopher, historian, and traveller, lived in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. Of his writings only a large geographical work has survived the wreck of the middle ages, but it is invaluable, though the existing copies of it are imperfect. In several parts of that work he displays his sagacity and diligence in making observations, and extraordinary justness in his reasonings upon them. He describes geological phenomena, particularly elevations of land, alteration of the lines of coasts, and the existence of the remains of sea-animals at considerable distances from the sea ; and he shows that he entertained very good ideas upon their instrumental causes.*

These subjects however appear to have been forgotten or neglected during the long night of intellectual darkness till the revival of letters. In the age of the Reformation and through more than the century which followed, the powerful and active minds of Europe were occupied with other inquiries, of the highest importance ; so that few of the great men of those days seem to have sought “ sermons in stones ” and science in frightful ravines, pits, and precipices. A small number of naturalists, chiefly in Italy, rose above the prejudices which, however ridiculous, were supported not by vulgar minds only, but by persons of high cultivation ; yet who could seriously believe that the bones and shells, and the impressions and

* Strabonis Res Geogr. pp. 71, 73, 79, 89 ; ed. Falconer. An interesting summary of the testimonies from him and other ancient writers, upon this class of facts, is given by Mr. Lyell, in his Principles of Geology, book i. chap. ii.