

while, in general, no doubt was cast upon their organic origin, the natural conclusion was drawn from them that they proved the sea to have once overspread the land.

This deduction was likewise adopted after the revival of learning. But by this time the Church had gained such an ascendancy over the minds of men that no opinions were allowed to be promulgated which appeared to run counter to orthodox beliefs. If therefore an observer who found abundant sea-shells imbedded in the rocks forming the heart of a mountain chain ventured to promulgate his conclusion that these fossils prove the mountains to consist of materials that were accumulated under the sea, after living creatures appeared upon the earth, he ran imminent risk of prosecution for heresy, inasmuch as according to Holy Writ, land and sea were separated on the third day of creation, but animal life did not begin until the fifth day. Again, the overwhelming force of the evidence from organic remains that the fossiliferous rocks must have taken a long period of time for their accumulation could not fail to impress the minds of those who studied the subject. But to teach that the world must be many thousands of years old was plainly to contradict the received interpretation of Scripture that not more than some 6000 years had elapsed since the time of the Creation.

To court martyrdom on behalf of such speculative opinions was not a course likely to be followed by many enthusiasts. Various shifts were accordingly adopted, doubtless in most cases honestly enough, in