

these exquisitely designed but deceptive pieces of mineral matter, with no apparent object unless to puzzle and disconcert the mind of frail humanity.¹

If they refused to accept the latter alternative, they found themselves face to face with the dogmas of the Church and the consequences of professing disbelief in them. The only escape from the dilemma which then presented itself to such orthodox minds was to have recourse to the Deluge of Noah. This event was at that period regarded as having been a world-wide catastrophe when, according to the sacred narrative, "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." For those writers especially who had little or no personal acquaintance with the actual conditions of the problem, who did not realise the orderly manner in which the fossils are disposed, layer upon layer, for thicknesses of many thousand feet in the solid rocks of the land, the doctrine of the efficiency of the Flood offered a welcome solution of the difficulty. They had no conception of the physical impossibility of accumulating all

¹ It is almost incredible how long some of these ignorant beliefs lasted, and what an amount of argument and patience had to be expended in killing them. I have been told that even within the last century a learned divine of the University of Oxford used to maintain his opinion that the fossils in the rocks had been purposely placed there by the devil, in order to deceive, mislead and perplex mankind. On the other hand, an opinion of a contrary tendency was promulgated in the latter half of the previous century by a Swiss naturalist, Bertrand, who suggested that the fossil plants and animals had been placed there directly by the Creator, with the design of displaying thereby the harmony of His work, and the agreement of the productions of the sea with those of the land.