

evidence that the sea once covered the sites of the hills. His contemporary, Mattioli, on the other hand, supported the old figment of the *materia pinguis*, though admitting that porous bodies, such as the bones and shells so abundant in Italy, might be turned into stone by being permeated by a petrifying juice. He is said to have been the first writer who published a reference to the fossil fishes of Monte Bolca. The skilful anatomist Falloppio (1557), when he met with bones of elephants, teeth of sharks, shells and other fossils, refused to admit them to be anything but earthy concretions, because he deemed that to be a simpler solution of the problem than to suppose that the waters of the Deluge could have reached as far as Italy. Aristotle had decided against any universal flood, and the authority of this philosopher was then about as potent as that of Holy Writ. So much did Falloppio lie under the influence of this prejudice, that he thought it not unlikely that the potsherds of Monte Testaceo at Rome were in like manner natural productions of the earth.

An important mineral collection, containing many fossil shells, which had been gathered together in the Vatican by Pope Sixtus V., was described and excellently figured by Mercati (1574) who, however, with all these well preserved organisms under his eyes, denied their true organic nature, and came to the conclusion that they were mere stones that had assumed their present shapes under the influence of the celestial bodies. It is worthy of notice that another collection of natural history objects which,