

strate from them that France once lay beneath the sea, which had left behind it such vast quantities of the remains of the creatures that peopled its waters.

In Normandy, whence many of Guettard's early collections came, and where the people of the country looked upon certain fossil bodies as forms of fruit—pears and apples that had fallen from the trees and taken a solid form within the earth—he tells how half-witted he seemed to them when he expressed a doubt regarding what they believed to be an obvious truth. He recognised the animal nature of the organisms, and asserted that the so-called peaches, apples and pears all belonged to the class of corals, though many of them are now known to be sponges.

Of all his numerous and voluminous essays on palæontological subjects, perhaps that which most signally displays Guettard's modern and philosophical habit of mind in dealing with fossil organisms is a long paper in three parts, which appeared in 1765 under the title, "On the Accidents that have befallen Fossil Shells compared with those which are found to happen to Shells now living in the Sea."¹ The controversy about "figured stones" had not yet died out, and there were still not a few observers who continued to believe that the apparent shells found in the rocks of the land never really belonged to living creatures, but were parts of the original structure of the earth. It is difficult, perhaps, to imagine ourselves in the position of naturalists who even as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, could still honestly persuade themselves that the organic remains of fossiliferous

¹ *Trans. Acad. Roy. Sciences* (1765), pp. 189, 329, 399.