

scarcely credible, that but a century ago it was a matter of serious investigation with the philosophers of those times, whether the shells imbedded in the earth had ever been recent shells, secreted by their respective inhabitants; or whether the shells, bones, plants, wood, &c. discovered in a fossil state, were not formed by what was termed the plastic power of the earth; in the same manner as mineral ores and crystals are produced.

In a natural history of England published towards the end of the last century, it is gravely stated that at Bethersden in Kent, stone is found full of shells, "*a proof,*" says the learned editor, "*that shells and the animals we find in them living, have no necessary connexion.*" And at no remote period, we have another amusing instance of the prevailing opinions, for it is stated in a history of the county of Surrey, that in a search for coal near Guildford the borers broke, and "this was thought by Mr. Peter Lely, the astrologer, to have been the work of subterranean spirits, who broke off the augers of the miners, lest their secret haunts should be invaded."

But there were many eminent men in England who were greatly in advance of the age in which they lived, and strenuously exerted themselves to discover and promulgate correct principles in this science. Among these, Dr. Martin Lister, physician to Queen Anne, was one of the most distinguished. This accomplished naturalist, in his great work on shells, which remains to this day a splendid monument of