

have been ready to make any concessions, in order to establish this preliminary point. Such a compromising policy was short-sighted, since it was to little purpose that the nature of the documents should at length be correctly understood, if men were to be prevented from deducing fair conclusions from them.

Diluvial Theory.—The theologians who now entered the field in Italy, Germany, France, and England, were innumerable; and henceforward, they who refused to subscribe to the position, that all marine organic remains were proofs of the Mosaic deluge, were exposed to the imputation of disbelieving the whole of the sacred writings. Scarcely any step had been made in approximating to sound theories since the time of Fracastoro, more than a hundred years having been lost, in writing down the dogma that organized fossils were mere sports of nature. An additional period of a century and a half was now destined to be consumed in exploding the hypothesis, that organized fossils had all been buried in the solid strata by Noah's flood. Never did a theoretical fallacy, in any branch of science, interfere more seriously with accurate observation and the systematic classification of facts. In recent times, we may attribute our rapid progress chiefly to the careful determination of the order of succession in mineral masses, by means of their different organic contents, and their regular superposition. But the old diluvialists were induced by their system to confound all the groups of strata together instead of discriminating,—to refer all appearances to one cause and to one brief period, not to a variety of causes acting throughout a long succession of epochs. They saw the phenomena only as they desired to see them, sometimes misrepresenting facts, and at other times deducing false conclusions from correct data. Under the influence of such prejudices, three centuries were of as little avail as a few years in our own times, when we are no longer required to propel the vessel against the force of an adverse current.

It may be well, therefore, to forewarn the reader, that in tracing the history of geology from the close of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century, he must expect to be occupied with accounts of the retardation, as well as of the advance, of the science. It will be necessary to point out the frequent revival of exploded errors, and the relapse from sound to the most absurd opinions; and to dwell on futile reasoning and visionary hypothesis, because some of the most extravagant systems were invented or controverted by men of acknowledged talent. In short, a sketch of the progress of geology is the history of a constant and violent struggle of new opinions against doctrines sanctioned by the implicit faith of many generations, and supposed to rest on scriptural authority. The inquiry, therefore, although highly interesting to one who studies the philosophy of the human mind, is too often barren of instruction to him who searches for truths in physical science.

Quirini, 1676.—Quirini, in 1676*, contended, in opposition to Scilla, that the diluvian waters could not have conveyed heavy bodies

* De Testaceis fossilibus Mus. Septaliani.