

the kingdom must have been formed since the more recent vegetation of the Red Sandstone lived and died, and was entombed amid the smooth sands of some deep-sea bottom.

But how formed? Several antagonist theories have been promulgated in attempted resolution of the puzzle. By some the salt has been regarded as a volcanic product ejected from beneath; by some, as the precipitate of a deep ocean overcharged with saline matter; by some, as a deposit of salt-water lakes cut off from the main sea, like the salt lagoons of the tropics, by surf-raised spits or bars, and then dried up by the heat of the sun. It seems fatal to the first theory, that the eras of Plutonic disturbance in this part of the kingdom are of a date anterior to the era of the Saliferous Sandstone. The Clent Hills belong to the latest period of trappean eruption traceable in the midland counties; and they were unquestionably thrown up, says Murchison, shortly after the close of the Carboniferous era, — many ages ere the Saliferous era began. Besides, what evidence have we derived from volcanoes, either recent or extinct, that rock-salt, in deposits so enormously huge, is a volcanic product? Volcanoes in the neighborhood of the sea — and there are but few very active ones that have not the sea for their neighbor — deposit not unfrequently a crust of salt on the rocks and lavas that surround their craters; but we never hear of their throwing down vast saliferous beds, continuous for great distances, like those of the New Red Sandstone of England. And further, even were salt in such huge quantity an unequivocally volcanic production, how account for its position and arrangement here? How account for the occurrence of a volcanic product, spreading away in level beds and layers for nearly two hundred miles, in one of the least disturbed of the English formations, and forming no inconsiderable portion of its strata? As for the second theory, it