

CHAPTER XVII.

Cowper and the Geologists. — Geology in the Poet's Days in a State of great Immaturity. — Case different now. — Folly of committing the Bible to a False Science. — Galileo. — Geologists at one in all their more important Deductions; vast Antiquity of the Earth one of these. — State of the Question. — Illustration. — Presumed Thickness of the Fossiliferous Strata. — Peculiar Order of their Organic Contents; of their Fossil Fish in particular, as ascertained by Agassiz. — The Geologic Races of Animals entirely different from those which sheltered with Noah in the Ark. — Alleged Discrepancy between Geologic Fact and the Mosaic Record not real. — Inference based on the opening Verses of the Book of Genesis. — Parallel Passage adduced to prove the Inference unsound. — The Supposition that Fossils may have been created such examined: unworthy of the Divine Wisdom; contrary to the Principles which regulate Human Belief; subversive of the grand Argument founded on Design. — The profounder Theologians of the Day not Anti-Geologists. — Geologic Fact in reality of a kind fitted to perform important Work in the two Theologies, Natural and Revealed; subversive of the "Infinite-Series" Argument of the Atheist; subversive, too, of the Objection drawn by Infidelity from an Astronomical Analogy. — Counter-objection. — Illustration.

It may have been merely the effect of an engrossing study long prosecuted, but so it was, that of all I had witnessed amid the scenes rendered classic by the muse of Cowper, nothing more permanently impressed me than a few broken fossils of the Oolite which I had picked up immediately opposite the poet's windows. There had they lain, as carelessly indifferent to the strictures in "The Task," as the sun in the central heavens, two centuries before, to the denunciations of the Inquisition. Geology, however, in the days of Cowper, had not attained to the dignity of a science. It lacked solid footing as it journeyed amid the wastes of Chaos; and now tipped, as