

command credence, the natural answer of most ordinary observers calls at once upon vast primeval convulsions that suddenly upheaved the mountains, rent open ravines and glens for the rivers, and unfolded wide valleys to receive and remove the drainage to the lower grounds and the sea. These paroxysms are vaguely looked upon as in some way a record of the first grand uprising of the dry land out of chaos. The popular belief for centuries past, and probably still in the greater part of Christendom, is well expressed by Milton—

‘ When God said,  
“ Be gathered now, ye waters under heaven,  
Into one place, and let dry land appear”!  
Immediately the mountains huge appear  
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave  
Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky.  
So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low  
Down sunk a hollow bottom, broad and deep,  
Capacious bed of waters.’<sup>1</sup>

But even amid the light of science, with recognition of the truth that instead of being remnants of a primeval chaos, mountains are of many different ages, and have, indeed, arisen at intervals all through the geological past, the belief in titanic convulsion as the main factor in the shaping of the contours of the dry land still holds its ground. There is an air of grandeur and simplicity about this explanation which has made it popular. It deals with that dreamland of conjecture lying far beyond the pathways of sober science, where facts are not needed either for the foundation or superstructure of theory. Requiring no scientific knowledge or training, it can be easily appreciated, and may be readily applied to any region by those to whom the very name of geology is unknown. Even where some knowledge of the results of geological investigation

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Lost*, book vii. l. 282.