

have expected, at least, that the balance of probability would now have been presumed to incline towards the close analogy of the ancient and modern causes. But, after repeated experience of the failure of attempts to speculate on geological monuments, as belonging to a distinct order of things, new sects continued to persevere in the principles adopted by their predecessors. They still began, as each new problem presented itself, whether relating to the animate or inanimate world, to assume an original and dissimilar order of nature; and when at length they approximated, or entirely came round to an opposite opinion, it was always with the feeling, that they were conceding what they had been justified *à priori* in deeming improbable. In a word, the same men who, as natural philosophers, would have been most incredulous respecting any extraordinary deviations from the known course of nature, if reported to have happened *in their own time*, were equally disposed, as geologists, to expect the proofs of such deviations at every period of the past.

I shall proceed in the following chapters to enumerate some of the principal difficulties still opposed to the theory of the uniform nature and energy of the causes which have worked successive changes in the crust of the earth, and in the condition of its living inhabitants. The discussion of so important a question on the present occasion may appear premature, but it is one which naturally arises out of a review of the former history of the science. It is, of course, impossible to enter into such speculative topics, without occasionally carrying the novice beyond his depth, and appealing to facts and conclusions with which he will be unacquainted, until he has studied some elementary work on geology, but it may be useful to excite his curiosity, and lead him to study such works by calling his attention at once to some of the principal points of controversy.*

* In the earlier editions of this work, a fourth book was added on Geology Proper, or Systematic Geology, containing an account of the former changes of the animate and inanimate creation, brought to light by an examination of the crust of

the earth. This I afterwards (in 1838) expanded into a separate publication called the Elements of Geology, of which a third edition will shortly appear. — March, 1850.