

contemporaneous with strata generally classed by geologists as Upper Silurian.

The imagination may well take alarm at the confusion which we may expect to encounter in settling sundry questions of Geological chronology, when we have to deal with ancient deposits found on the frontiers of distinct Natural History provinces. But it is consolatory to reflect that all this ambiguity will arise out of the strict agreement prevailing between the present and ancient condition of the globe, and the laws governing the changes of its surface, whether they be those of the animate or inanimate world. So long as we feel sure that in existing nature we have a 'key' for interpreting the mysteries of the past, we need never despair; whereas, had the causes acting in the remoter ages differed either in kind or degree from those now operating, our science must forever have continued one of mere conjecture and ingenious speculation.

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ANTIQUITY OF FOSSIL BIRDS (p. 456).

SINCE the table printed at p. 456 was compiled (in 1854), the records of this great class of Vertebrata can be carried back somewhat farther in time, or one step lower down in the Tertiary series. Early in 1855 the tibia and femur of a large bird equalling at least the ostrich in size were found at Meudon near Paris, at the base of the Plastic clay. This bird, to which the name of *Gastornis Parisiensis* has been assigned, appears, from the Memoirs of MM. Hébert, Lartet, and Owen, to belong to an extinct genus. Professor Owen refers it to the class of wading land-birds rather than to an aquatic species.\*

That a formation so much explored for economical purposes as the Argile Plastique around Paris, and the clays and sands of corresponding age near London, should never have afforded any vestige of a feathered biped previously to the year 1855, shows what diligent search and what skill in osteological interpretation are required before the existence of birds of remote ages can be proved by more decisive evidence than their supposed foot-prints.

\* Quart. Geol. Journ., vol. xii. p. 204, 1856.