

CHAPTER XXXV.

SOME THOUGHTS ON PERPETUAL MOTION.

FROM the citations made in the last chapter we discover the existence of a unanimity of belief in the doctrine of periodical catastrophes which is well calculated to excite a spirit of scientific curiosity. It can scarcely be attributed to a mere tradition descending through the ages, and through all the nations between us and the ancient sages upon the banks of the Ganges. Mere tradition is generally circumscribed by the nationality or race among whom it originates. A tradition of a philosophic character must have been subjected to the scrutiny of the philosophers of the nations to which it traveled. If admitted, and maintained, and perpetuated from age to age among different nations, it must have been because recognized as something more than a tradition. The philosophy of Greece and Rome never harbored a tenet which could only be defended as an Oriental tradition. It must have discovered some rational grounds for the acceptance of this belief, and thus have made it a philosophic principle.

What were the grounds of the naturalization of this Oriental faith we might be unable to determine. Pythagoras, however, explicitly taught that his faith was founded on an observation of geological phenomena; and Lyell thinks that the doctrine in general was based upon records and traditions of deluges and earthquakes, any of which came far short of revolutionizing the face of the earth.

A doctrine so ineradicable, and so spontaneous in every soil, must have rested upon a *rational* belief. That belief