

is liable to alteration, as facts accumulate or are better understood. Hence what seems to be a well-established deduction in one age may be seen to be more or less erroneous in the next. Every year, however, the data on which these inferences are based are more thoroughly comprehended and more rigidly tested. Geology now possesses a large and ever-growing body of well-ascertained fact, which will be destroyed by no discovery of the future, though it will doubtless be vastly augmented, while new light may be cast on many parts of it now supposed to be thoroughly known.

Each of us has it in his power to add to this accumulation of knowledge. Careful and accurate observation is always welcome, and may eventually prove of signal importance. While availing ourselves freely of the use of hypothesis as an aid in ascertaining the connection and significance of facts, we must be ever on our guard against premature speculation and theory, clearly distinguishing between what is fact and what may be our own gloss or interpretation of it. Above all, let us preserve the modesty of the true student, face to face with the mysteries of Nature. Proving all things and holding fast that which we believe to be true, let us look back with gratitude and pride to what has been achieved by our forerunners in the race, and while we labour to emulate their devotion, let us hold high the torch of science, and pass it on bright and burning to those who shall receive it from our hands.