

they act a very uncandid and unreasonable part : but we can administer no remedy to them, so long as they persist in refusing to provide themselves with the requisite preliminary knowledge, and to examine the question with far more diligence and patience, and I may add Christian honour too, than they appear to have yet exercised.

We readily acknowledge that the problem, *to represent geological by astronomical time*, is of the greatest difficulty ; perhaps it is utterly beyond human power to resolve, in the present state of our being.* Some approximation is all that we venture to hope for. It is self-evident that the application of any continuous measure of time, analogous to our common periods of multiples and products, is utterly out of the question. It would be the height of absurdity to imagine it for each one of the phenomena whose aggregate forms the whole case, must have occupied its own particular portion of time destitute of any rule of conformity to others. In the formation of strata, each process (transportation, deposition, consolidation, elevation and subsidence ; to be followed by a renewal of similar actions under new conditions ; and that probably several times repeated) might occupy a duration different from that of the corresponding process in every other stratum or system of strata. Yet this does not set aside the reality of a prevailing analogy ; nor does it destroy the evidence of a general conclusion from a multitude of particular facts, each one of which must have required, for its consummation, a very long period ; we may in most cases say, immensely long. This will appear, if we consider a few of those facts.

1. The remains of human beings and of any vestiges of the arts and operations of man, are discovered only upon or in those surfaces and earthy masses which are demonstrably posterior to all regular geological deposits ; and under circumstances indicating the human species to have been among *the most* recent products of the Creator's power. Disinterments of human bones have often occurred, with articles characteristic of an age, one third, and in the Egyptian relics one half, of the period since the creation of man ; but these are all in

* In 1834, the Council of the Royal Society announced the prize of one of the Royal Medals, the gift of the Sovereign, to the author of the best paper, to be entitled "Contributions towards a System of Geological Chronology, founded on the Examination of Fossil Remains and their attendant phenomena." The period for such communication was fixed to expire in June 1837. It did so expire, without producing the result desired. "The Geologists of England," remarks Prof. Phillips, "gave a fair proof that hypotheses were out of fashion, when they declined to compete for the medal." *Treat. on Geol.* (in *Lardn. Cyclop.*) vol I. p. 245.