

DESCRIPTIVE GEOLOGY.

CHAPTER I.

PRELUDE TO SYSTEMATIC DESCRIPTIVE GEOLOGY.

Sect. 1.—Ancient Notices of Geological Facts.

THE recent history of Geology, as to its most important points, is bound up with what is doing at present from day to day; and that portion of the history of the science which belongs to the past, has been amply treated by other writers.¹ I shall, therefore, pass rapidly over the series of events of which this history consists; and shall only attempt to mention what may seem to illustrate and confirm my own view of its state and principles.

Agreeably to the order already pointed out, I shall notice, in the first place, Phenomenal Geology, or the description of the facts, as distinct from the inquiry into their causes. It is manifest that such a merely descriptive kind of knowledge may exist; and it probably will not be contested, that such knowledge ought to be collected, before we attempt to frame theories concerning the causes of the phenomena. But it must be observed, that we are here speaking of the formation of a *science*; and that it is not a collection of miscellaneous, unconnected, unarranged knowledge that can be considered as constituting science; but a methodical, coherent, and, as far as possible, complete body of facts, exhibiting fully the condition of the earth as regards those circumstances which are the subject matter of geological speculation. Such a Descriptive Geology is a pre-requisite to Physical Geology, just as Phenomenal Astronomy necessarily preceded Physical Astronomy, or as Classificatory Botany is a necessary accompaniment to Botanical Physiology. We may observe also that Descriptive Geology, such as we now speak of, is one of the classificatory sciences, like

¹ As MM. Lyell, Fitton, Conybeare, in our own country.