

geology. We may, indeed, readily believe that we have much to do in both these departments. While so large a portion of the globe is geologically unexplored;—while all the general views which are to extend our classifications satisfactorily from one hemisphere to another, from one zone to another, are still unformed; while the organic fossils of the tropics are almost unknown, and their general relation to the existing state of things has not even been conjectured;—how can we expect to speculate rightly and securely, respecting the history of the whole of our globe? And if Geological Classification and Description are thus imperfect, the knowledge of Geological Causes is still more so. As we have seen, the necessity and the method of constructing a science of such causes, are only just beginning to be perceived. Here, then, is the point where the labors of geologists may be usefully applied; and not in premature attempts to decide the widest and abstrusest questions which the human mind can propose to itself.

It has been stated,<sup>11</sup> that when the Geological Society of London was formed, their professed object was to multiply and record observations, and patiently to await the result at some future time; and their favorite maxim was, it is added, that the time was not yet come for a General System of Geology. This was a wise and philosophical temper, and a due appreciation of their position. And even now, their task is not yet finished; their mission is not yet accomplished. They have still much to do, in the way of collecting Facts; and in entering upon the exact estimation of Causes, they have only just thrown open the door of a vast Labyrinth, which it may employ many generations to traverse, but which they must needs explore, before they can penetrate to the Oracular Chamber of Truth.

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I REJOICE, on many accounts, to find myself arriving at the termination of the task which I have attempted. One reason why I am glad to close my history is, that in it I have been compelled, especially in the latter part of my labors, to speak as a judge respecting eminent philosophers whom I reverence as my Teachers in those very sciences on which I have had to pronounce a judgment;—if, indeed, even the appellation of Pupil be not too presumptuous. But I doubt not that such men are as full of candor and tolerance, as they are of knowledge and thought. And if they deem, as I did, that such a history of

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<sup>11</sup> Lyell, B. i. c. iv. p. 103.