

vellous procession of plants and animals which, since the beginning of time, has passed over its surface,—these and a thousand cognate themes with which geology deals, have attracted numbers of readers and workers to its pale, have kindled much general interest, and awakened not a little enthusiasm. But the records from which the chronicle of events must be compiled are sadly deficient and fragmentary. The deductions which they suggest ought frequently to be held in suspense from want of evidence. Yet with a certain class of minds, fancy comes in to supply the place of facts that fail. And thus geology has been encumbered with many hypotheses and theories which, plausible as they might seem at the time of their promulgation, have one by one been dissipated before the advance of fuller and more accurate knowledge. Yet before their overthrow, it may often be hard to separate the actual ascertained core of fact within them from the mass of erroneous interpretation and unfounded inference that forms most of their substance.

From the beginning of its growth, geology has undoubtedly suffered from this tendency to speculation beyond the sober limits of experience. Its cultivators have been often described as mere theorists. And yet in spite of these defects, the science has made gigantic strides during the last hundred years, and has gradually accumulated a body of well-ascertained knowledge regarding the structure and history of the earth. Few more interesting records of human endeavour and achievement can be found than that presented by the advance of this science. Little