

PREFACE.

THIS WORK was written in 1821, and it has therefore slept even beyond the Horatian period. I have waited ten years, in the announced hope that some better man would stand forward in the breach, the representative of Geological science as it now is: endeavouring also to tempt others to this perilous honour, by the occasional publication of certain portions. I do not see that it has been superseded; nor that there are any hopes from a longer delay. I did also expect that time would have brought material improvements, through the efforts of the present multitude of labourers. I grieve to say that it has scarcely received a valuable addition from this source, and not a single fundamental one. The evidences of Geology have indeed been multiplied; yet through identical facts only: since I do not perceive that a new one has been added to the Science. This ought not to have been.

Having already published every thing, derived from my own observation, on which the present attempt is built, these have long been as much the common property as what I have borrowed. Whether those to whom I have so long left this task, have thought that it could not be executed, or should not be attempted, or whether there be any other reason, it is not for me to conjecture. But he who says that System is a presumptuous title, does not know the meaning of that word; since it neither implies perfection, nor the pretence to it. It is a view of the actual condition of any Science at the time; and all have had their tentative systems or approximations. Every science now possesses one: yet not even Astronomy is perfect.

Systems approach perfection by degrees: and he who produces one, facilitates the production of a better. He also who makes the first attempt is not to be envied: since all are as ready to censure its defects as they are able to see what the author himself points out: choosing to forget that he has done so, while ignorant or neglectful of what has been done and what overcome. The traveller over a solid road knows