

nothing of the toil that first laid it on the quaking morass, and as little does he care; while he is enraged at the casual rut. But though such a System should teach nothing, it would be valuable by the display of its very defects. No chasm can be filled till it is known: while thus are errors and blanks classed with the nearest truths, so as to indicate the way by which they are to be corrected and supplied. All sciences commence with error; and he who waits for the hour of perfection, suppressing what he knows, because too proud or too timid to confess a pardonable ignorance, is the *Σχολαστικος* who will not enter the water till he can swim. Nor will the day of truth ever arrive, if they who can add to the stock of knowledge confine it within themselves.

Be the result what it may, it is my duty to say, that it rests, with some exceptions, on my own observations, confirming those of others, when not original. Observers may differ; but Nature is always the same. And it was my duty to confirm my references to authorities, by applying to the great source of all Authority, wherever this was possible. Thence have I quoted, more in confirmation than for any other purpose: never trusting, even to names of reputed weight, when the facts were contradictory to those which I had verified, or to just analogies, or to the principles of the collateral sciences: assured that Nature cannot differ from herself, nor one truth oppose another. These are the real grounds on which the validity of authorities must be tried: and hence perhaps have I quoted fewer than might have been expected: yet, I think, enough; since an indiscriminate or careless reliance on them is a most perilous foundation for a work on this Science. An ambitious multiplicity of writers, sectarianism, and hypothesis, must ever be the source of bad observations, if not also of gratuitous assertions: while an established phraseology gilds all this with the aspect of knowledge. No system of geology can yet be compiled from the works of others; though often attempted. Kirwan has revelled in authorities to prove how much we knew: a later writer has proved, from the same authorities, that we know nothing. Nor does any one who even aspires to the name of philosopher, suffer another to reason for him; as, never yet was any system in philosophy founded on the eyes or the opinions of others.

Geologists have been accused of founding theories upon single and favoured districts; yet have I drawn my chief illustrations from Britain. It is true: but there is no resemblance in the applications: as I can