

Such is the precise enumeration of the successive masses with which nature has enveloped the globe. The positive geological information presented by it, has been obtained, by combining the knowledge furnished by mineralogy with that presented by the sciences connected with organic existence. This order, so new and so interesting in facts, has only been acquired by geology, since it preferred positive knowledge, furnished by observation, to fanciful systems, contradictory conjectures regarding the first origin of the globe, and all those phenomena, which, having no resemblance to what actually takes place in nature, could neither find in it, for their explanation, materials nor touchstone. A few years ago, the greater number of geologists might have been compared to historians, who, in writing the history of France, should have interested themselves only about the events which had taken place among the Gauls before the time of Julius Cesar. In composing their romances, however, these historians would have taken advantage of their knowledge of posterior facts; and the geologists of whom I speak, absolutely neglected the posterior facts, which could alone have reflected some light upon the darkness of preceding times.