

NOTE CONCLUSORY.

THUS ends a book, composed in solitude, and almost without the cognizance of a single human being, for the sole purpose (or as nearly so as may be) of improving the knowledge of mankind, and through that medium their happiness. For reasons which need not be specified, the author's name is retained in its original obscurity, and, in all probability, will never be generally known. I do not expect that any word of praise which the work may elicit shall ever be responded to by me; or that any word of censure shall ever be parried or deprecated. It goes forth to take its chance of instant oblivion, or of a long and active course of usefulness in the world. Neither contingency can be of any importance to me, beyond the regret or the satisfaction which may be imparted by my sense of a lost or a realized

benefit to my fellow-creatures. The book, as far as I am aware, is the first attempt to connect the natural sciences into a history of creation. The idea is a bold one, and there are many circumstances of time and place to render its boldness more than usually conspicuous. But I believe my doctrines to be in the main true ; I believe all truth to be valuable, and its dissemination a blessing. At the same time, I hold myself duly sensible of the common liability to error, but am certain that no error in this line has the least chance of being allowed to injure the public mind. Therefore I publish. My views, if correct, will most assuredly stand, and may sooner or later prove beneficial ; if otherwise, they will as surely pass out of notice without doing any harm.

My sincere desire in the composition of the book was to give the true view of the history of nature, with as little disturbance as possible to existing beliefs, whether philosophical or religious. I have made little reference to any doctrines of the latter kind which may be thought inconsistent with mine, because to do so would have been to enter upon questions for the settlement of which our knowledge is not yet ripe. Let the reconciliation of whatever is true in my views with

whatever is true in other systems come about in the fulness of calm and careful inquiry. I cannot but here remind the reader of what Dr. Wiseman has shewn so strikingly in his lectures, how different new philosophic doctrines are apt to appear after we have become somewhat familiar with them. Geology at first seems inconsistent with the authority of the Mosaic record. A storm of unreasoning indignation rises against its teachers. In time, its truths, being found quite irresistible, are admitted, and mankind continue to regard the Scriptures with the same respect as before. So also with several other sciences. Now the only objection that can be made on such ground to this book, is, that it brings forward some new hypotheses, at first sight, like geology, not in perfect harmony with that record, and arranges all the rest into a system which partakes of the same character. But may not the sacred text, on a liberal interpretation, or with the benefit of new light reflected from nature, or derived from learning, be shewn to be as much in harmony with the novelties of this volume as it has been with geology and natural philosophy? What is there in the laws of organic creation more startling to the candid theologian than in the Copernican system or the

natural formation of strata? And if the whole series of facts is true, why should we shrink from inferences legitimately flowing from it? Is it not a wiser course, since reconciliation has come in so many instances, still to hope for it, still to go on with our new truths, trusting that they also will in time be found harmonious with all others? Thus we avoid the damage which the very appearance of an opposition to natural truth is calculated to inflict on any system presumed to require such support. Thus we give, as is meet, a respectful reception to what is revealed through the medium of nature, at the same time that we fully reserve our reverence for all we have been accustomed to hold sacred, not one tittle of which it may ultimately be found necessary to alter.

THE END.