

**ON THE FAILURE OF  
GEOLOGICAL ATTEMPTS IN  
GREECE. PRIOR TO THE EPOCH  
OF ALEXANDER. PART I**

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ON THE FAILURE OF  
GEOLOGICAL ATTEMPTS IN GREECE

PRIOR TO THE EPOCH OF ALEXANDER.

BY

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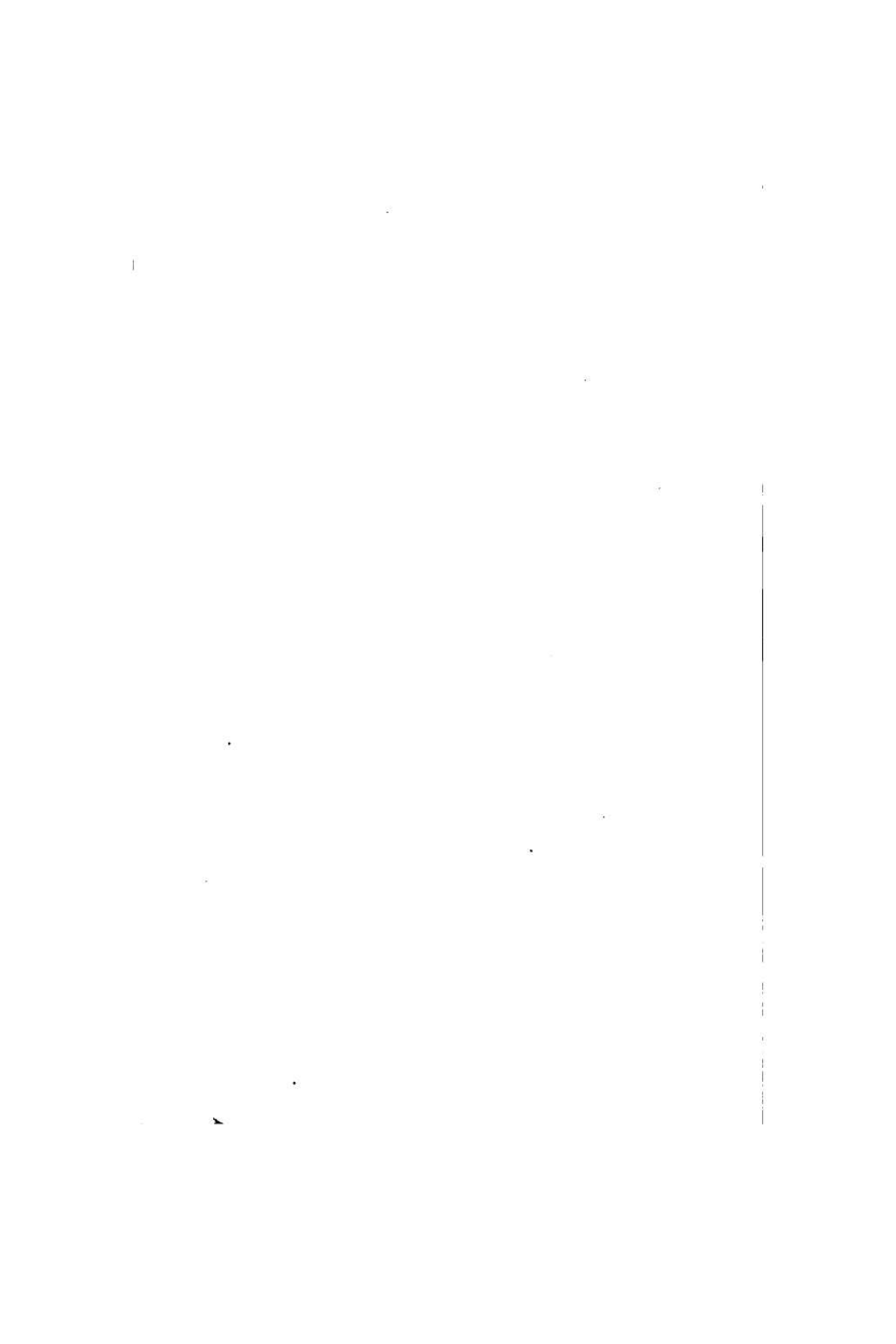
PART I.

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## P R E F A C E.

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In presenting this volume to the English public, I do not pretend to have opened new sources for the elucidation of terrestrial science. Geology is the acquirement of the nineteenth century; its primitias owe their origin entirely to modern genius. Unlike Astronomy, the discoverer of the present heliocentric system of which himself confessed that he borrowed the idea from a Greek record, this young branch of human knowledge owes none of its present systems to ancient suggestion. Therefore I cannot find fault with the philosophical author of the 'History of the Inductive Sciences,' who devotes no separate article to Greek geological attempts. Strictly speaking, the Greeks had no geology at all. For it would appear rather an insult to the manes of a Werner, a W. Smith, or a Cuvier to term so the attempts which their philosophers made to arrive at a geogony.

But when we take into consideration the part the Grecian tribes were destined to perform in the history of the civilization of the Caucasian race, when we consider what admiration in many intellectual respects they have ever received from posterity, our curiosity is, of course, excited to establish, on as trustworthy a ground as possible, even their unsuccessful attempts (made perhaps inductively) to construct the history of the past vicissitudes of our earth.

Now this has not yet been done.

Much ingenuity has been expended both by medieval and modern writers who from time to time have ventured to decipher alarm-awaking scientific inheritances from this or that classical passage, or even from some classical allegory. Now no sober scholar would have ever relied, if rigorously educated in classical literature, essentially upon the exclusive authority of a Diogenes Laertius, Iamblichus, Porphyry, or Stobæus in preference to a clear testimony of Xenophon, Aristotle, Theophrastus, or Aristoxenus.

I have therefore undertaken to collect and submit to a critical review all those treatises and passages in classical literature which make an obvious allusion to geological observation. Although I have remarked above, that I utterly disclaim anything like a vindication of an ancient Greek geology, I use these expressions, "geology" and "geological," in the sequel of the present volume, just as I use the words "creation," "created," attaching to them, however, a wider signification.

I think the reader will perceive that throughout the volume I have intended to confine my review to data the authenticity of which was never questioned by philologists. I felt no ambition whatever to build up instantly a whole system, where the mutilated state of the preserved remains left but one single reference. I felt that in no part of scientific history does the annalist run so great a risk of being seduced by a certain group of circumstances to unscientific suggestions as just here. My researches can boast of two points only which are entitled to be regarded as somewhat pretensive suggestions—the doctrine of a geological central fire, and the palæontological theory of Empedocles. The former had been animadverted upon by Prof. Röth, but in terms which required essential modifications. And even there I would not for a single moment capriciously insist upon the precise historical character of the facts; I propose my view as a hypothesis to facilitate the solution of many serious difficulties respecting the Pythagorean philosophy. The question whether the rotation of the earth on her axis was taught or not by Plato's 'Timæus,' might not receive hence any decisive answer. The views of Martin, Cousin, Gruppe, Böckh, Letronne, Prantl, Whewell, and Grote will perhaps receive only very faint illustration from my allusions: what I attach importance to in Prof. Gruppe's words are not his arguments with regard to the 'Timæus,' but his and Jakobi's observations on the seventh book of Plato's 'Laws.' As



to the former, I am rather inclined to excuse those who side with Böckh or even with Grote; but as to the latter, I consider Gruppe as yet unrefuted. At the same time, I feel no logical necessity to interpret Vitruvius in the same manner with Böckh and Humboldt's 'Kosmos.'

As to Empedocles, I seriously intended to exercise myself, so to say, in the virtue of abstinence from vague conjectures and startling generalizations. More detailed appreciations might perhaps result from future inquiries. I purpose to furnish these my researches with a complete philological apparatus: this more extensive edition will perhaps leave the press in the course of a year. I have added some notes, proofs, and illustrations, as well as three appendices also to the present, which I would have regarded rather as a precursory *résumé* of the facts observed. Yet, I fear, the scientific reader, if not a philologist, will feel some annoyance at being brought into collision with passages or expressions quoted in the original language. For the present I could not help this disadvantage. I was eager to secure as soon as possible the data I have accumulated; and for this purpose I deemed it best, in default of scientifically establishable translations, to cite the original terms in the text, and to give some conjectures in the Notes.

Besides this, I trespassed against the elegance of English style, by retaining such epithets as the "φυσικοί," "φυσιολογία," "διαδοχή," &c. Those who have spent hours of toil in dealing with the minutiae of classical cosmical philosophy and literary peculiarities, will excuse me for having so piously preserved, even in a work in which I must condemn Greek genius, these antique characteristics. Finally, I must declare that while examining Greek dissertations, dissentient as I am from Sir C. Lewis, I shall always acknowledge the necessity of searching after connexions or analogies in other ancient literatures, as *e.g.* the Egyptian, Cuneatic, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Chinese, &c., but I shall never go so far as the ingenious German who attempted to prove, by the aid of otherwise respectable erudition, that the doctrine of Pythagoras was traceable to the Chinese, that of Anaxagoras to the Hebrew, that of the Eleates to the Hindoo, and that of Heraclitus to that of Zoroaster. Such inquiries are ever liable, learned and skilful as they are, to an important error: they derive their conclusions from analogous traits of a metaphysical and moral description. Such historians forget that a certain uniformity of human *à-priori-reasoning*,

*deductive philosophy*, in the intellectual life of races inhabiting the most remote latitudes, might be admitted even by ethnologists who lay claim to different foci of creation, and reject every close early communication as effected in consequence of affiliations. Surely if men of science had separated from the so-called systems of those philosophers those parts which appear at first sight as the result of, perhaps rough, but undoubtful astronomical, zoological, botanical, mineralogical, and quasi-geological observations, and then looked for some allied phenomena within the ken of the nations above referred to, such a confusion would never have arisen. Those marvellous systems of the ancients owed, as every all-embracing system, their chief features to individual *taste*; and the shaded gradations of the latter *may* coincide in a striking manner within the scope of the most different nations, yet the objects and phenomena which may have been observed by them as innate to the heavenly space or to the terra-queous crust, never.

*Stuhlweissenburg, in Hungary, April 6, 1862.*

# SYNOPSIS

OF THE

SUBJECTS TREATED UPON IN THE FORTHCOMING WORK OF THE  
AUTHOR; ANSWERING ALSO AS A KEY TO THOSE MENTIONED  
IN THE FOLLOWING ESSAY.