

out from the old university, educated naturalists for the next generation.

In the Geological Section, Sir Roderick Murchison, the president, and Sir Charles Lyell, the first on the list of vice-presidents, were the acknowledged heads; Sedgwick, the only other of the great geological leaders, was absent. Murchison is a man of imposing presence and gentlemanly exterior, bland and affable, ever striving to soften the asperities of discussion. Lyell, a man of less majestic aspect, but with a magnificent head, and thoughtful, penetrating countenance, which, now that age is stealing upon him, impresses one all the more with the fact, that his is the greatest and most logical intellect, that has been brought to bear on the earth's history in our day. Murchison is the geologist of the palæozoic rocks, the most successful systematizer of the older formations, which, before his time, were involved in confusion. Lyell is the geologist of the caenozoic, or more recent period of the earth's geological history, the reducer to order of the heterogeneous and widely scattered tertiary deposits. Murchison, like Phillips, is a conservative geologist, slow to adopt new views, and striving to hold the balance between opposing theories. Lyell is the most progressive, and least conservative of the older geologists, and marches in the van of geological progress with as much alacrity as the youngest votaries of the science.

In glancing from these names to those that follow them in the lists of the Association, I feel that there is a wide interval. The present state of natural science in England is that of a rapid transition from an era of giants to an era of mediocre men. This has often been the case in the history of science. One generation produces a crop of great men : the next, perhaps, a multitude of useful, but not brilliant or distinguished followers. It is quite apparent that such men as Lyell, Murchison, Sedgwick, Phillips, Owen, and Faraday have no worthy successors in their special departments of science in England. Not that able, hard-working, and successful men are wanting. There are many such ; but it is evident that when the older men die off, their places will be occupied by far inferior minds ; many of them mere collectors of facts, others framers of hypotheses which carry them away from truth ; the best only fitted to carry forward creditably the work which men of greater genius have originated.

One of the most interesting subjects of geological enquiry at present is the question of the antiquity of man ; or, more properly,