

vient to an explanation of the laws which the Divine Author of all things has established for the renovation, maintenance, and government of the organic and inorganic kingdoms of Nature. Based as Geology is upon observations of the various physical changes which are now taking place, and on investigations of the natural records of those changes, in periods antecedent to all human history and tradition, the rocks and mountains are the alphabet, the book of Nature the volume, by which the student of this interesting department of science can best learn its important lessons. But to those who cannot examine Nature in her secret recesses, or accompany an experienced teacher to the valleys, or the mountain-tops, lectures illustrated by specimens and drawings, afford, perhaps, the best substitute for the more efficient and delightful mode of instruction.

That we may obtain a clear and comprehensive view of the vast field of inquiry that lies open before us, artificial classifications are necessary in this, as in other departments of science; and without assuming that the arrangement in which the various deposits are grouped by geologists, will not, in the progress of discovery, require considerable modification, it will be necessary, as an introduction to the subjects hereafter to be discussed, to place before you a tabular view of the formations in their presumed chronological order. At the same time it is necessary to bear in mind, that all classifications of this kind