

P R E F A C E

TO THE EIGHTH EDITION.

THE Principles of Geology in the first five editions embraced not only a view of the *modern changes* of the earth and its inhabitants, as set forth in the present work, but also some account of those monuments of analogous changes of *ancient* date, both in the organic and inorganic world, which it is the business of the geologist to interpret. The subject last mentioned, or "geology proper," constituted originally a fourth book, now omitted, the same having been enlarged into a separate treatise, first published in 1838, and called "The Elements of Geology," and afterwards recast and expanded in 1842. The "Principles" and "Elements" thus divided, occupy, with one exception, to which I shall presently allude, very different ground. The "Principles" treat of such portions of the economy of existing nature, animate and inanimate, as are illustrative of Geology, so as to comprise an investigation of the permanent effects of causes now in action, which may serve as records to after ages of the present condition of the globe and its inhabitants. Such effects are the enduring monuments of the ever-varying state of the physical geography of the globe, the lasting signs of its destruction and renovation, and the memorials of the equally fluctuating condition of the organic world. They may be regarded, in short, as a symbolical language, in which the earth's autobiography is written.

In the "Elements," on the other hand (or the "Manual of Elementary Geology," as I shall in future call that work), I have treated briefly of the component materials of the earth's crust, their arrangement and relative position, and their organic