

TO THE READER.

OF the twelve following Lectures, four (the First, Second, Fifth, and Sixth) were delivered before the members of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution (1852 and 1855). One (the Third) was read at Exeter Hall before the Young Men's Christian Association (1854), and the substance of two of the others (the Eleventh and Twelfth) at Glasgow, before the Geological Section of the British Association (1855). Of the five others,—written mainly to complete and impart a character of unity to the volume of which they form a part,—only three (the Fourth, Seventh, and Eighth) were addressed *viva voce* to popular audiences. The Third Lecture was published both in this country and America, and translated into some of the Continental languages. The rest now appear in print for the first time. Though their writer has had certainly no reason to complain of the measure of favour with which the read or spoken ones have been received, they are perhaps all better adapted for perusal in the closet than for delivery in the public hall or lecture-room; while the two concluding Lectures are mayhap suited to interest only geologists who, having already acquainted themselves with the generally-ascertained facts of their science, are curious to cultivate a further knowledge with such new facts as in the course of discovery are from time to time