

P R E F A C E .

THE following lectures were prepared and delivered, by the appointment of the Committee of the Congregational Lecture, under some peculiarity of circumstances. The appointment was unexpected, and the notice unavoidably short. Several parts therefore, and those referring to subjects of the greatest importance, were treated in a manner too brief, and indeed extemporaneously : but to the kind and attentive audience the promise was given that, if the publication should take place, the author would supply those deficiencies. This he has endeavoured to do, partly by filling up the portions which, in the delivery, were but sketched, and partly by adding Notes, both on the immediate pages, and in a Supplementary Appendix.

The reader will perceive that numerous citations are introduced. For this, no apology is requisite : and, indeed, so richly interesting are the most of those passages, that it would have been a wrong to the subject and to the reader to have withheld them. Another circumstance proves their importance and even necessity. The facts which are the basis of geological reasonings can be known to the majority even of well educated persons,