

inactive hypothesis: it is no more than expressing in the form of simple narrative, facts of whose separate reality we have the fullest evidence, and the consecutive occurrence of which we consider as in the highest degree probable.

Let the mind represent to itself a large space of the bed of an ancient ocean, into which the sedimentary materials from the land have been transported, through a period of time to us immeasurable. Along this extended surface the deposits, in the varieties which changing circumstances in both the land and the waters have produced, are spread. By the weight of an ocean five or six miles in depth, and by the antagonist pressure, with more or less intensity, of heat from the underlying fires, this formation is consolidated. A series of movements from below raises up a portion of this deposit; till it is above the water-level, with its hills and dales and susceptibilities of further variation of surface. Ages roll on. Other strata are laid upon the portion of the area which had not partaken of the elevating movements; or which may have moved in the contrary direction; that is, may have sunk down: so that a difference of mineralogical (called also lithological) character is produced over it. The former portion long lies as a part of the dry land, is washed over by rains and rivers, and is subjected to other causes of superficial change; then it becomes subject to the process of slow subsidence, consequent upon some great change in the fiery region below, and it becomes once more the bed of oceanic waters. Here, in due but various process of time, it is overspread with a new stratum, differing from its own preceding surface, and from the one or several strata which had in succession been laid upon the portion not elevated during the whole period; the difference being probably in mineral composition and texture, but more certainly in the character of vegetable