

---

almost infinite variety of particulars as to their intimate nature and constitution (and, as we shall see further on, of their internal structure, and the mechanism by which they are held together as bodies), which by no other means we can obtain : information which at present we are only imperfectly able to interpret, but whose import, from year to year, and almost from week to week, is becoming better understood. Its language in this respect bears no distant similitude to that of a series of ancient inscriptions in some unknown tongue and character. A single sentence once developed by some happy and unmistakable concurrence of evidence, affords a clue to others, which in their turn become the stepping-stones of further progress. By the one are revealed the histories of ages long buried in oblivion, and of the phases of human thought and action under circumstances bearing little analogy to anything we now see around us : by the other we are admitted a step nearer to the perception of the intimate working of those powers which maintain the material universe as it stands, and the laws they observe.