

necessity of regarding as a consequence of miracle, a peculiarity of shape easily explicable on the principles of known law.

Now, the fact of a molten earth involves a long series of conditions, each different from all the others, and from the conditions of the present time. It involves the existence of a period in the history of our planet when life, animal or vegetable, was not, and of a succeeding period, when life *began* to be. It involves, too, the ripening of the earth from ages in which its surface was a thin, earthquake-shaken crust, subject to continual sinkings, and to fiery outbursts of the plutonic matter, to ages in which it is the very nature of its noblest inhabitant to calculate on its stability as the surest and most certain of all things. It involves, in short, those successive conditions of life in the geologic ages which, in connexion with what is now Scotland, I have, I am afraid, all too inadequately attempted to set before you in my present course. In fine, the primary rocks, when they underlie to a great thickness, as in our own country, the Palæozoic deposits, I regard as the deposits of a period in which the earth's crust had sufficiently cooled down to permit the existence of a sea, with the necessary denuding agencies,—waves and currents,—and, in consequence, of deposition also; but in which the internal heat acted so near the surface, that whatever was deposited came, as a matter of course, to be metamorphosed into semi-plutonic forms, that retained only the stratification. I dare not speak of the scenery of the period. We may imagine, however, a dark atmosphere of steam and vapour, which for age after age conceals the face of the sun, and through which the light of moon or star never penetrates; oceans of thermal water heated in a thousand centres to the boiling point; low half-molten islands, dim through the fog, and scarce more fixed than the waves themselves, that heave and tremble under the impulsions of the igneous agencies;