

Under these heads we propose to examine the successive transformations to which the earth has been subjected in reaching its present condition ; in other words, we propose, both from an historical and descriptive point of view, to take a survey of the several *epochs* which can be distinguished in the gradual formation of the earth, corresponding with the formation of the great groups of rocks enumerated in the preceding table. We shall describe the living creatures which have peopled the earth at each of these epochs, and which have disappeared, from causes which we shall also endeavour to trace. We shall describe the plants belonging to each great phase in the history of the globe. At the same time, we shall not pass over entirely in silence the rocks deposited by the waters, or thrown up by eruption during these periods ; we propose, also, to give a summary of the mineralogical characters and of the fossils characteristic of, or peculiar to each formation. What we propose, in short, is to give a history of the formation of the globe, and a description of the principal rocks which actually compose it ; and to take also a rapid glance at the several generations of animals and plants which have succeeded and replaced each other on the earth, from the very beginning of organic life up to the time of man's appearance.