

organic and organic kingdoms of nature, together with the causes of these changes, as far as they can be traced by observations on the structure and mode of occurrence of the mineral and organic bodies that form or are found in and upon the crust of the earth.

To place the events of this complicated history in clear chronological succession is the chief business of the geologist; and in doing so he unites the present with past geological epochs, and discovers that the physical world, as it now exists, is the result of all the past changes that have taken place in it. If, therefore, our knowledge were sufficient to admit of the construction of a complete system of physical geography, it would be but a full description of a geological epoch—namely, that of to-day; and a complete account of any old geological epoch, would be a perfect description of the physical geography of the world at that time.

To us, the chief dwellers on the Earth, the whole subject is of the greatest interest, and it is therefore my intention to endeavour to show in a simple manner—taking our own island as an example—whence the materials that form the present surface of the earth have been derived, why one part of a country consists of rugged mountains, and another part of high tablelands or of low plains; why the rivers run in their present channels; how the lakes that diversify the surface first came into being. In the course of this inquiry I shall have occasion to show that Britain has been joined to and severed again and again from the continent, and how some of the animals that inhabited, or still inhabit it, including its human races, came to occupy the areas where they live.

Assuming that I am partly addressing those who have not previously studied geological subjects in detail,