

that now entitles geology fairly to take its place among the exact sciences. Few persons now study the old prophets and fathers in geology, and therefore I have thought it well to give the foregoing imperfect sketch of the slow progress of the steps by which at length men have become able to analyse the order of deposition of formations, and of their fossilised contents, as abridged in the foregoing chapters.¹

¹ The words formation, epoch, series, period, are in this book only used as convenient terms. When analysed they often imply that certain links, chapters, or whole books are missing in geological history, epochs in fact unrepresented in given areas by stratified formations. If I were to write a complete history of the British rocks, I would endeavour to explain the special meaning of each of these unrepresented gaps in time. A thorough-going physical geologist, working in concert with a thorough palæontologist, might even hope to form a fair notion of the nature of the missing life of the unrepresented epochs.