

## THE EARTH.

FRAMED AND FURNISHED AS A HABITATION FOR MAN.

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Our subject is the "wide, wide world;" but, as our instrument is this narrow, narrow mind, and our allotted space this short, short hour, you must not expect either the fulness of an elementary treatise, or the freshness of original discovery in geographic or geologic science. Few have time, and fewer talent, for doing the work of Dr. Livingstone on the surface of the globe, or of Hugh Miller in the strata of its crust: we must be content with the humbler task of examining and exhibiting the facts and laws which others have found out. But the facts and laws of nature are jewels that do not grow dim with age: bright, bright jewels the oldest of them are to-day, and fit to glitter on a royal crown side by side with those which have been fished out of the ocean or quarried out of the earth in our own time. God's work does not, like man's, grow shabby by length of wear: real pearls will shine as brightly after they have been worn a thousand years, as when they first emerged from the mother shell.

I occupy the humble place of working jeweller: the old brilliants are placed in my hands, with orders to set them in a diadem yet once more; and be sure—so my instructions seem to run—be sure to set them so that they shall receive the sunlight on different sides, and glance upon each other with new varieties of colouring.

We start, then, with the globe as it came into our possession, whirling round on its own axis once a day, and round the sun once a year. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth:" this is the whole amount of our knowledge regarding the *creation* of the world: the process of finishing and furnishing it as a habitation for man has been much more fully revealed. In Genesis a perspective view of the work is given on a scale all but infinitely reduced. As nearly all the space of the Bible was required for displaying the moral government of God and prosecuting the moral education of man, only a single page could be spared for all the processes of nature, throughout all the prehuman

periods of time. On that page the work of unnumbered ages is represented in miniature. The landscape, from that eastern horizon where created being first dimly dawns, down to where the historic period lies on this late evening-tide of time, is reduced on the camera to an handbreadth, and so photographed upon the first leaf of Revelation. Most precious is that unique ancient gem: as the magnifying instruments of science increase in power, and gradually resolve its mysterious nebula into separate stars, it will become more and more manifest that, though its scale is marvellously diminutive, its execution is divinely true.

When a microscope reveals the Lord's Prayer all beautifully legible on the space of a pin-head, if the observer were not aware of the modern art of painting by sunlight on any scale, he would suppose that a miracle must have laid the letters on. It was a miracle indeed that sketched the processes of creation on a page, at a time when photography was unknown. The coincidence between the days of Genesis and the successive periods of geology, corroborates the proof of the inspiration of Moses, whatever special interpretation you may prefer: such knowledge of the geologic successions as is implied in the first chapter of Genesis, seems not possible, without an extraordinary divine intervention, in that day.

A fuller record of the earth's prehuman history is written, as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, on the rocks which constitute its crust. As might have been expected, some doubts and disputes have sprung up in regard to the meaning of the ancient manuscript: the learner in this book penetrates from the surface downwards and reads, like a Chinaman, in vertical, not horizontal lines: the characters, moreover, like the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt, are not alphabetical letters, but plants and animals figured in full. These circumstances render the process of deciphering difficult and slow; but the meaning of nature's hieroglyphs, when the key is found,