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### THE WAY PREPARED.

#### CHAPTER I.—PHYSICAL OBSTACLES.

When a shipbuilder wishes to secure his vessel against possible disaster, he divides it into water-tight compartments. Should the ship strike upon the rocks, and the sea gain admission into one of its compartments, it will continue to float nevertheless by the buoyant power of the others. On a similar principle, and for a similar end, doubtless, has the Creator of all things arranged the globe. He has partitioned it into islands and continents, as the shipbuilder, provident of danger, partitions his vessel into numerous water-tight compartments.

Here is America lying afar from the old world, in the midst of the Atlantic. Here is Britain divided by the sea from the rest of Europe. Here are India and China, with a barrier of sandy deserts and snowy hills between them and the western world. And here is Australia, and here are islands innumerable, lying afar in the Pacific. And farther, lest these great physical divisions should not suffice to subserve the end contemplated by the Creator, He has yet again divided the human family into tongues and nations. Thus the globe is crossed and recrossed by lines of separation, both of a physical and of an ethnical character.—There might have been but one continent in the world, and the whole earth might have been of one nation, and of one speech, as it was in the days when Babel began to be built. But it is not so: and we may be sure that those volcanic agencies which were first set a-working, to break up the globe into plain and mountain, into sea and land,—and

those moral agencies which next were employed to separate its inhabitants into tongues and races,—were intended to accomplish some wise and beneficent end. The first effect of this peculiar arrangement was to restrict the intercourse of mankind; to throw obstacles in the path of human advancement, by rendering the diffusion of ideas and knowledge exceedingly slow. Evil and good, error and truth, were almost instantly met by some check or barrier, some diversity of tongue or of opinion, which put an effectual stop to their farther progress. They might propagate themselves over a country, or acquire the ascendancy in a nation, but the moment they reached a new frontier, they were met by a tongue which they could not interpret, or by some physical obstacle, which they could not surmount,—a chain of hills, or an impassable ocean, for instance,—and so they failed to gain the dominion of the world.—This appeared an evil: it was often lamented as such; but was it really so?—So far from viewing it as an evil in the circumstances of the world, we think it was an unspeakable good. The rapid diffusion of such ideas and such systems as then prevailed in the earth, would have been a serious calamity; it would, in all probability, have marred the destinies of the race at its very outset. Error was far stronger than truth in those ages, and had the globe been an extended plain and the human family but a single great nation, “of one language, and of one speech,” error to a certainly would have spread itself over the whole earth; it would have corrupted and subjugated all minds, leaving no nook of territory, and no race of men, where the immortal principles of truth could be preserved till better times should come round. It would