

**THE PAST AND PRESENT  
LIFE OF THE GLOBE, BEING  
A SKETCH IN OUTLINE OF  
THE WORLD'S LIFE-SYSTEM**

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The Past and Present Life of the Globe, Being a Sketch in Outline of the World's Life-System by  
David Page

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**DAVID PAGE**

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THE WORLD'S LIFE-SYSTEM

"The investigation of nature teaches us to recognise the omnipotence, the perfection, and the inscrutable wisdom of an infinitely higher Being, in his works and actions. So long as we are ignorant of these things, the perfect development of the human mind cannot be hoped for, or even conceived. Without this knowledge the immortal spirit of man cannot attain to a consciousness of its own dignity, or of the rank which it occupies in creation."—Lavoisier's *Familiar Letters on Chemistry*.

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PAST AND PRESENT LIFE  
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BEING A SKETCH IN OUTLINE  
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THE WORLD'S LIFE-SYSTEM

BY  
DAVID PAGE, F.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "INTRODUCTORY AND ADVANCED TEXT-BOOKS OF GEOLOGY"  
"HANDBOOK OF GEOLOGICAL TERMS," ETC.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON  
MDCCLXI

188. c. 53.  
~~100 c 52~~

TO

WILLIAM MILLER, ESQ.

IN PLEASANT REMEMBRANCE

OF HOURS AND EVENINGS OF DISCUSSION:

OUR THEME—

THE THEME OF THE FOLLOWING PAGES.





## P R E F A C E.

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THE object of the following Chapters is to present a sketch in outline of the World's Life-System—tracing from the earliest organisms in the stratified crust to the forms that now adorn and people its surface. The aim has been to link the remote to the recent—the living to the extinct—that the general reader may be enabled to form some intelligible conception of the whole as a great and continuously-evolving scheme of vegetable and animal existences. There is no attempt whatever to teach anatomical details or point out specific distinctions—the volume being intended not as a Handbook of Palæontology, but simply as a readable sketch for the information of those who have neither the time nor the preliminary training to avail themselves of works of higher scientific pretensions. And yet the reader will find in these pages a reliable *résumé* of the science, as founded on the most recent discoveries, and a treatment of its bearings from a higher stand-point than can be conveniently taken by the mere text-books and manuals of Geology. At a time

when the question of Life is receiving a wider audience, such a *résumé* may also be of utility in indicating the line that separates the assumed and hypothetical, from the known and ascertainable; and so prevent the unprofessional inquirer from ascribing to Geology what it does not affirm, or from expecting from its teachings what they cannot reveal.

Designed for the general reader, and delivered in part to popular audiences, the style is, perhaps, somewhat more rhetorical than befits the exactitudes of science; but even on this point the Author could not well have done otherwise. His object was to excite rather than satisfy the curiosity of his hearers—to impress them with the universality and uniformity of natural law—believing there can be no true notion of Nature or of Nature's requirements while her facts are viewed through the medium of the miraculous. Nor let it be thought that, by recognising in every instance the fixity and unerring operation of Law, we place a wider distance between the Creator and his works, or that any knowledge of this kind has a tendency to self-sufficiency or irreverence. On the contrary, he who knows most of creational law, and that the most intimately, stands generally the least in need of the injunction—"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou treadest is holy."

In treating such a theme as Life—its apparent origin and progress—the writer has necessarily had occasion