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PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.

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BY

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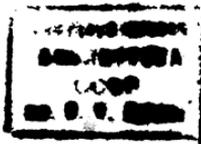
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PREFACE.

It is the object of the present volume to enable the general reader who desires information on the various branches of physical geography, or the student who wishes to be aware of its general scope as a science, to obtain an outline of the main facts in language as simple and definite as possible.

Physical geography, regarded as a science, does not admit of being treated in such a manner as to render it light reading. It involves not only a statement of numerous facts, but a great classification of facts and much close reasoning. It is, no doubt, of deep interest, and concerns us all very nearly, but like other subjects of real importance, it needs an effort on the part of the reader to appreciate the array of facts and observations on which it is based, the labour of reducing such observations to systematic results, and the deductions drawn from the facts and generalisations.

Physical geography occupies at present a definite position as a science. This position is different from that which it occupied fifteen or twenty years ago, when the only works of importance concerning it in our language were prepared. Many of the statements and facts recorded in those volumes are of course still valu-

able, but the progress of discovery in various directions has rendered information more precise, and has justified inferences and conclusions sometimes very different.

The present volume does not claim to be complete. It is an outline carefully prepared, and is intended to supply a serious want. It does not profess to skim merely over the surface of the science, but neither does it pretend to fathom the depths. It contains many carefully arranged facts and statements in the various departments of physical geography, and legitimate deductions from them. In expressing these deductions, the Author has perhaps, in some cases, given his own views, without pointing out that other physical geographers and geologists have expressed and still hold different opinions. It was not his object to enter into a discussion on any subject, and he only desires that generalisations should be estimated at their true value and according to the evidence. He believes, however, that where the conclusions arrived at differ most from popular notions, they are not inconsistent with the views of those who are recognised, both in England and on the Continent, as the ablest pioneers of science.

It has been decided not to accompany this volume with maps and illustrations. The Physical Atlas, originally published by Berghaus, and admirably rendered into English by Mr. Johnston, still remains the best and most useful work of its kind. The smaller English Edition of the Physical Atlas will be found a valuable companion to the reader in making use of the following pages.

ATHENÆUM CLUB,
London, 1866.