

**THE EARTH WE INHABIT:
ITS PAST, PRESENT AND
PROBABLE FUTURE**

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The Earth We Inhabit: Its Past, Present and Probable Future by Alfred W. Drayson

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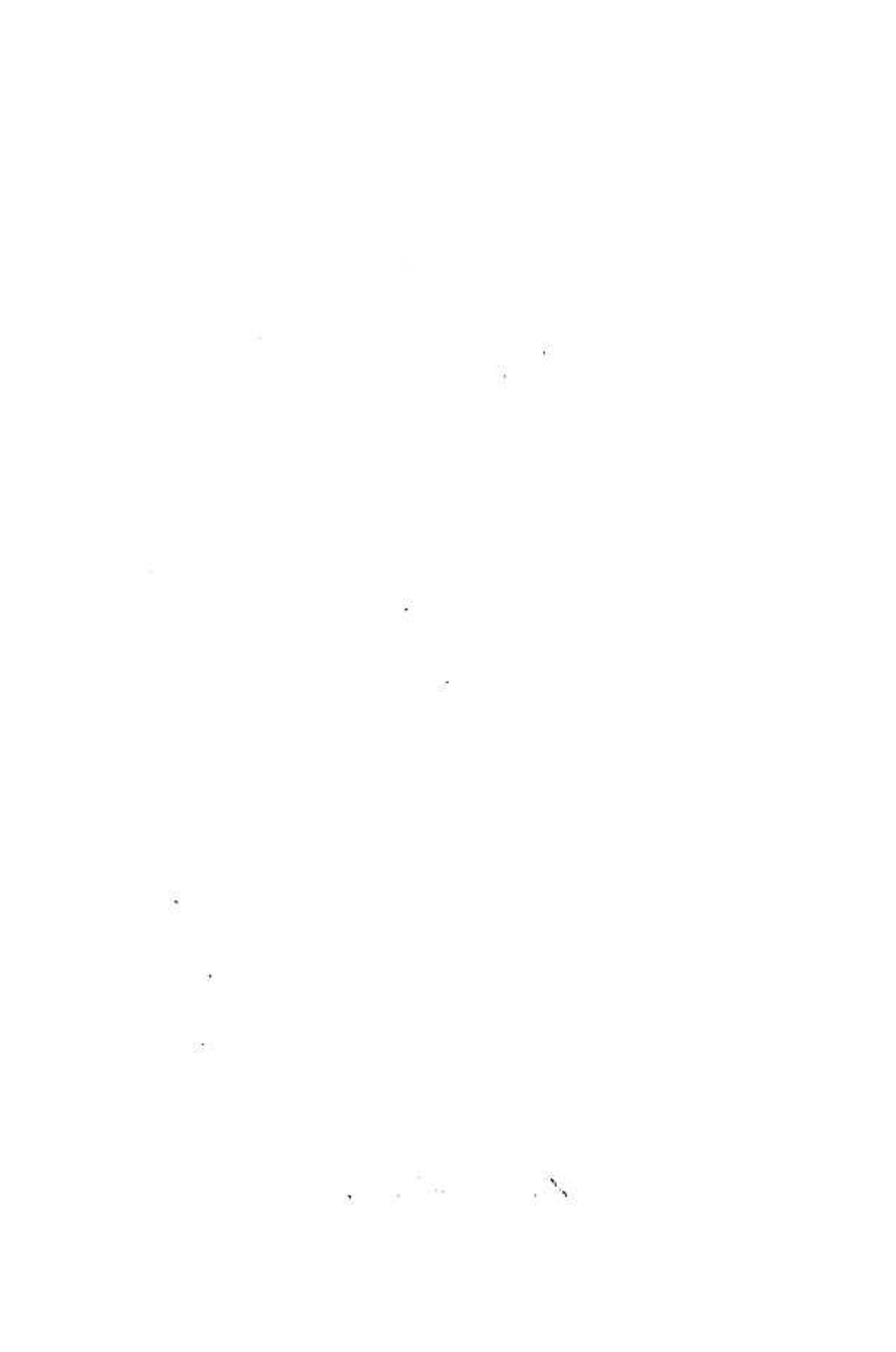
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ALFRED W. DRAYSON

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BY
CAPTAIN ALFRED W. DRAYSON,
Royal Artillery,
AUTHOR OF "SPORTING SCENES IN SOUTH AFRICA," &c.

"As yet we are in the infancy of our knowledge. What we have done is but a speck compared to what remains to be done. For what is there that we really know? We are too apt to speak as if we had penetrated into the sanctuary of Truth, and raised the veil of the goddess, when in fact we are still standing, coward-like, trembling before the vestibule, and not daring from very fear to cross the threshold of the temple."—*A Discourse* by HENRY THOMAS BUCKLE.

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EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES.

1859.

[The Author reserves the right of translating this book.]

184. h. 16.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

DURING several years experience in practical Surveying, certain inconsistencies with regard to measurement of distances and areas, were perpetually presenting themselves. The study of astronomy enabled me to investigate closely the observations connected with Geodesy, and to compare these observations with the recorded measurements. I could not then avoid noticing, that whilst the most perfect accuracy was supposed to have been attained in astronomy and surveying, still, when the results obtained by the two sciences were compared, the most alarming differences were almost invariably found to exist. The more perfect the instruments, and the more skilful the operators, the more surely was a discordance found.

Upon examining the records of former measured distances, it appeared that the later operations showed

this same distance to contain more feet and inches than formerly. My first idea was, that the measuring metals had contracted, but the great care which each operator had taken to guard against such a contingency, very shortly induced me to search for another cause. After many months, it was suggested to me, that possibly the earth was expanding, instead of the metals contracting; but no sooner did this idea present itself, than it was almost instantly rejected, for I hastily concluded that such a fact could not have escaped observation had it existed. I have always been disinclined to reject any suggestion, however novel, until I had closely examined its various phases. I therefore proceeded to reason upon the possibility of the growth of the Earth.

In itself this growth did not seem to be an impossibility, for all nature appeared to be on the increase. It was true, that science had laid down definite laws for organic and inorganic matter, but this science was dependent upon observation, and if the growth of the earth had escaped observation, then the conclusions of science might be fallacious, or in other words, the definition of the word "inorganic" might be incorrect.

The highest learning of the day has sometimes been wrong, for it was the most learned who ridiculed the miracles of our Saviour; it was the scientific who scorned the idea of satellites to Jupiter, of a Continent of America, of the sphericity of the earth, of steam; and many other matters within the compass of our own memory. Therefore it appeared not *impossible* that the earth might be increasing in size, although the fact was unknown to the scientific.

But then came the natural idea, that every person would and must discover this growth. Here was the dangerous point; for hasty conclusions are too often wrong; and it was at this turning that the whole problem was nearly being resigned.

The first step was to examine how the growth could be discovered, supposing that it were still going on. To measure a certain distance, wait a few years, and re-measure it, would be of course the first proceeding. But to do this, it would be necessary to wait some years, and the difficulty of maintaining during that time a certain standard, at once suggested itself to me.

The standard for common measurement is usually