

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATION ON THE EARTH

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The Development of Creation on the Earth by Thomas Lumisden Strange

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THOMAS LUMISDEN STRANGE

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BY

THOMAS LUMISDEN STRANGE,

LATE A JUDGE OF THE HIGH COURT OF MADRAS.

LONDON :
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"Does the Lord of Truth Himself speak to us, even in these discoveries, or suggestions of scientific research, and is He calling upon us, and inviting us, in them, to abandon, or to alter and qualify, our ancient and long-descended ideas by these new revelations of His infinite activity in the ages of the past?"—*G. Vance Smith in the Contemporary Review for April 1874.*

Rev. of "Miracles"

23,291

P R E F A C E.

THE phenomena of nature, to which the following pages relate, cannot present themselves to any thinking mind without claiming from it some solution. Hitherto we have been accustomed to suppose that we had before us, in an inspired record, a reliable account, in outline, of this earth's history, exhibiting to us the manner in which all things we observe were put into shape, or called into being, and the time when this was effected; but as knowledge has advanced, the Biblical representations have become exposed as untenable, so that with most instructed persons it has become a necessity to frame, upon the ascertained facts, some surer ideal of the mode in which the creative processes have been carried out, and to form some conception of the true probable periods involved in bringing them to their present stage of development.

On certain points, all who have any measure of knowledge on these subjects may be said to be agreed. The method has not been by sudden magical demonstrations of power, in so many distinct successive acts. Human delineators are apt to seek, by scenic representations, to attract attention to alleged direct divine agency. Such is not the character of true creative power, which moves silently, majestically, and unerringly, with no hurried

action or spasmodic effort, to its appointed ends. Through well-ordered systems, in use of natural means, simple yet grand in the magnitude of their results ; without limits of time or stint of applied forces ; slowly, gradually, but inevitably, from some early primitive stage, through a long series of methodized operations, we see accomplished, works planned with consummate design, and executed with unfailing skill. We have to consider the architect who exhibits himself in these stupendous undertakings. The means and channels through which the work is effected and maintained, are the known properties and susceptibilities of the materials used, brought into endless combinations. Nothing moves but in a law-directed course. All yields implicit obedience to the governance appointed to it. Some of the materials are readily discernible in their tangible solidity. Others more or less evade analysis and observation, such as the gaseous bodies, and heat, light, and magnetism ; and these are the most active and most powerful in their agency. Each atom has its uses and adaptibilities, and takes its place, and performs its part, in never-resting action, realizing the required adaptations for the composition of specific and closely allied forms. Nothing has independent existence or isolated aim. The power that moves the whole does not prosecute these labours by convulsive starts, nor is it ever exhausted. Creation knows no pause. It is always consistent with itself. What has been, is, and ever will be. We stand as inquiring observers in the midst of this unceasing work. We have not to contemplate the pictorial exhibition of an accomplished task. We are in the presence of a living artist continually displaying his resources, project-

ing what is illimitable, and unfathomable, holding us floating in the midst of an eternally expanding creation. The scenic view suits the sentiments of an uninstructed mind, and was devised in days of unavoidable ignorance. The comprehension of the well-ordered, truly-balanced, never-ending correlation of forces, with their perpetually diversified results, feeds the apprehensions of those who have better discernment. The imaginary representation dwarfs and debases the understanding; the true study nourishes and exalts the sentient being in the contemplation of the march of courses that are interminable. The recipient of the legendary statement is as one who has made his little fortune and invested it, neither discreetly nor profitably; the student of nature is in the midst of boundless wealth multiplying itself in unceasing and ever-varying fresh developments.

Our privilege is to contemplate and to endeavour to understand these great operations through the imperishable records they have left behind them. The earth, as it has often been observed, is laid out like a well-ordered cabinet, presenting to us, in measure, some means of judging how the laws of nature and the essential properties of matter have worked out all we see before us. That there have been depositions of strata, gradually laid down, and stocked with the remains of the living objects, vegetal and animal, that flourished when they were being imposed, is an universally acknowledged fact. It speaks of a constantly maintained series of operations whereby the globe has been brought to its present condition, and which are ever advancing it to stages that are still before it. That immeasurable ages have been consumed in effecting these developments is

also conceded. We witness the very graduated rate of the existing advances, and can see that the past action must have been conducted in the same slow, deliberate manner. For a time a stand was made in favour of the modern history assigned in the Biblical representations to the human race, but now all who have made the study, in view of the remains he has left behind him, and their position in the shelves of the earth's cabinet, are satisfied that to man also belongs some indefinable antiquity.

But there are other questions on which inquirers are not agreed, and which therefore still lie within the domains of fair discussion ; and unless I had had something to offer on these heads, I should have indulged in no representations of what is so currently accepted. The conditions of my argument have made it necessary that the known landmarks should be properly understood and worked upon ; nor could the Biblical statements, on which in other works I have been occupied, have been properly passed by without exhibiting what we know of the actual processes of creation. The doctrine of evolution, that is the production of settled organized forms out of shapeless matter, is one very generally received ; but it is coupled, by a certain class of students of nature, with the suggestion that one shape has grown out of another. Is there no better conception of the process to be formed than this, resting upon less hypothetical reasonings ? The theory that every living object has been produced from an antecedent germ, which is true in the generality of current instances, is sought to be applied to all. But the allegation meets with an insuperable difficulty, still to be solved, when we go back in thought to the