

ena which are found to be distributed in various groups, I would consider a few general questions intimately connected together, and bearing upon the nature of our knowledge of the external world and its different relations, in all epochs of history and in all phases of intellectual advancement. Under this head will be comprised the following considerations :

1. The precise limits of the physical description of the universe, considered as a distinct science.

2. A brief enumeration of the totality of natural phenomena, presented under the form of a *general delineation of nature*.

3. The influence of the external world on the imagination and feelings, which has acted in modern times as a powerful impulse toward the study of natural science, by giving animation to the description of distant regions and to the delineation of natural scenery, as far as it is characterized by vegetable physiognomy and by the cultivation of exotic plants, and their arrangement in well-contrasted groups.

4. The history of the contemplation of nature, or the progressive development of the idea of the Cosmos, considered with reference to the historical and geographical facts that have led to the discovery of the connection of phenomena.

The higher the point of view from which natural phenomena may be considered, the more necessary it is to circumscribe the science within its just limits, and to distinguish it from all other analogous or auxiliary studies.

Physical cosmography is founded on the contemplation of all created things—all that exists in space, whether as substances or forces—that is, all the material beings that constitute the universe. The science which I would attempt to define presents itself, therefore, to man, as the inhabitant of the earth, under a two-fold form—as the earth itself and the regions of space. It is with a view of showing the actual character and the independence of the study of physical cosmography, and at the same time indicating the nature of its relations to *general physics, descriptive natural history, geology, and comparative geography*, that I will pause for a few moments to consider that portion of the science of the Cosmos which concerns the earth. As the history of philosophy does not consist of a mere material enumeration of the philosophical views entertained in different ages, neither should the physical description of the universe be a simple encyclopedic compilation of the sciences we have enumerated. The difficulty of defining the limits of intimately-connected studies has been increased, because for centuries it has been customary to designate various branches