fire, and water the last is the only one which happens to be an individual chemical compound. From that day to this the unique position of water has never been shaken. It remains the most familiar and the most important of all things.

Within a comparatively recent time, to be sure, it has definitely lost its claim to be a true element, in the modern sense, but meanwhile almost every great development of science has but contributed to make its importance more clear. In physics, in chemistry, in geology, in meteorology, and in biology nothing else threatens its preëminence. The physicist has perforce chosen it to define his standards of density, of heat capacity, etc., and as a means to obtain fixed points in thermometry. The chemist has often been almost exclusively concerned with reactions which take place in aqueous solution, and the unique chemical properties of water are of fundamental significance in most of the departments of his science. In geology neptunism has at length won a certain though incomplete truimph over plutonism, and the action of water now appears to be far the most momentous factor in geological evolution.[1] The meteorologist perceives

[1] "Of all geological agencies water is the most obvious and apparently the greatest, though its efficiency is conditioned