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Louis Figuier Translated by Henry W. Bristow
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Louis Figuier (1819–94) was destined to remain in academia until disagreements with fellow scholars led him to abandon this path and instead pursue ‘the idea that scientific knowledge, which until then had been almost exclusively the property of the learned, should be put within the reach of the reading public.’ Published in 1863, *La Terre avant le déluge* became a classic of popular science and introduced palaeontology to a wider readership; that this English translation appeared only two years later is an indication of its impact. Figuier wrote that his aim was ‘to trace the progressive steps by which the earth has reached its present state ... and to describe the various convulsions and transformations through which it has successively passed’. The book was also celebrated for its inclusion of more than 200 illustrations by a pupil of Doré, Édouard Riou (1833–1900), who became famous as Jules Verne’s illustrator a few years later.

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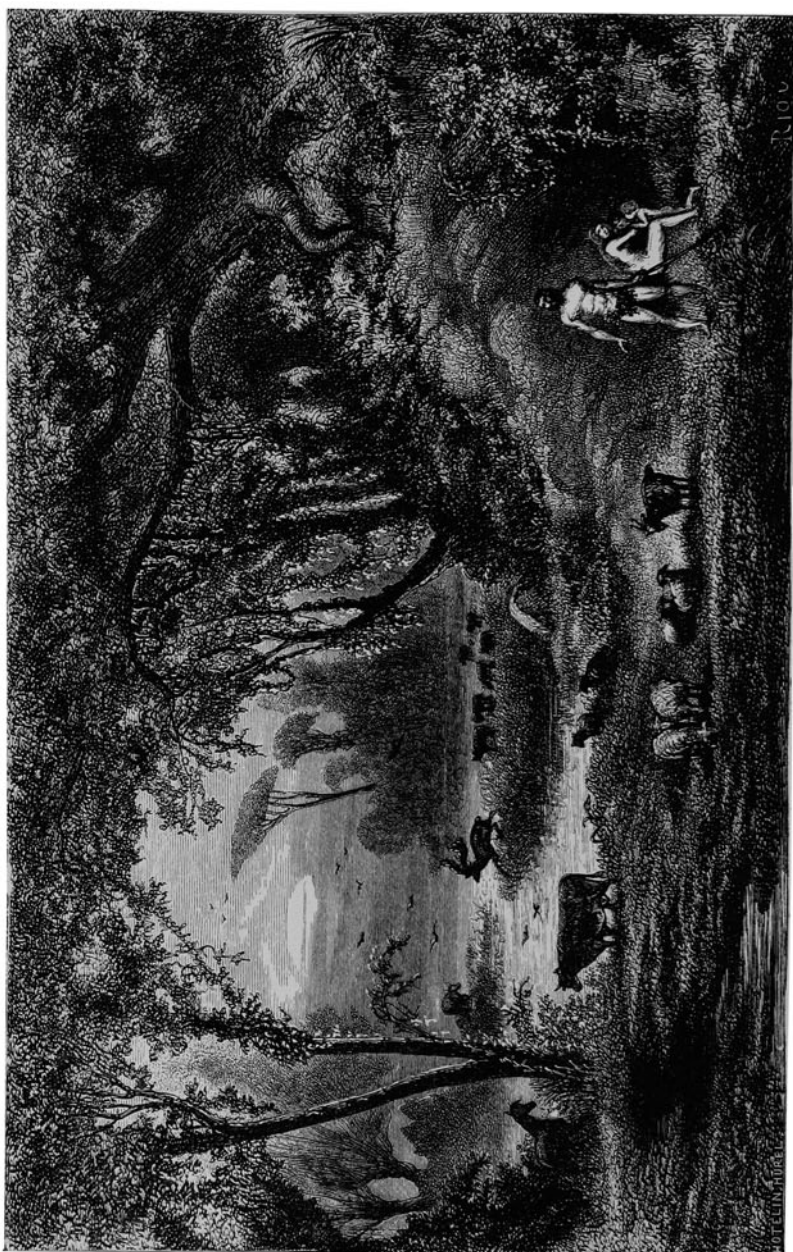
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THE WORLD
BEFORE
THE DELUGE.

BY LOUIS FIGUIER.

CONTAINING

TWENTY-FIVE IDEAL LANDSCAPES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD,

DESIGNED BY RIOU.

AND TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHT FIGURES OF ANIMALS, PLANTS, AND
OTHER FOSSIL REMAINS AND RESTORATIONS.

Translated from the Fourth French Edition.

LONDON:
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TO
SIR RODERICK IMPEY MURCHISON,
K.C.B., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S. V.P.G.S., ETC., ETC.,
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM,
AND PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY,
WHOSE ORIGINAL WORK 'SILURIA' FIRST ATTRACTED THE TRANSLATOR
TO THIS CLASS OF STUDIES,
THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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L'ENVOI.



THE 'World before the Flood' is a reproduction of one of those *Œuvres de Luxe* in which our neighbours of France delight to exhibit their refined tastes in literature and art. Its object is to give a History of the progressive steps by which the earth has reached its present state, from that condition of chaos "when it was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the waters," tracing the various convulsions and transformations through which it has passed, until, in the words of the poet, it may be said—

Where rolls the deep, there grew the tree;
O Earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There, where the long street roars, hath been
The silence of the central sea.

It is no small compliment to the Author, and to the intelligence of our neighbours, to be able to state, that four editions have been demanded, and twenty-five thousand purchasers found for the work in the space of less than two years: a demand, so far as I know, altogether unprecedented for works of a scientific character.

With regard to this reproduction, little need be said; the simple and elegant language in which the Author has expressed himself, and the profound interest inseparable from the subject itself, rendered the task of translating him a labour of love. The only instances in which it has been found necessary to depart from, or rather to enlarge upon, the text have occurred where examples were necessary to elucidate

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particular theories or series of stratification—these the Author had naturally enough drawn from France: in the translation these are preserved, but, in addition, others drawn from British Geology have been added, either from the writer's own knowledge, or from the works of well-known British writers. It has also been considered desirable, for similar reasons, to enlarge upon the views of British geologists, to whom the French work scarcely does justice, considering the extent to which the science is indebted to them for its elucidation—I may almost say for its existence.

One point more, and I have done. In the original work the chapter on Eruptive Rocks comes at the end of the work, but, as the work proceeded, I found so many unexplained allusions to that chapter that it seemed more logical, and more in accordance with chronological order, if I may use an expression not quite applicable, to place that chapter at the beginning.

In most cases I have explained the technical terms on the first occasion of their being used, so as to render them intelligible to the general reader; but to have done so whenever they occurred would have made the work tedious. I have therefore made the Index an explanatory one, by giving definitions of most of the terms in their alphabetical order.

In dedicating the English version of M. Figuier's work to a well-known geologist, I must not lead the reader to believe that Sir Roderick Murchison entertains views similar to those of the Author on several portions of his great subject; but I presume that he fully admits the value of a volume which, through its popular and attractive character, has roused the minds of many persons for the first time to a due consideration of the noble science of Geology.

W. S. O.

Kensington, May, 1865.

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