

ships that were imprisoned in various ports were considered lucky when reports arrived of the wreck of hundreds of others on new reefs and uncharted sand banks. From Boston to Savannah, a general elevation of the ocean floor and of the land along the coast was in rapid progress, and the axis of elevation was soon ascertained to be nearly upon the meridian of 75° west longitude and to extend at least 100 miles on each side of it.

This was considered very curious, because a number of highly scientific people had recently persuaded themselves and many followers that old theories of a fluid or viscous interior of the earth, which claimed for it a crust not over twenty miles in thickness, resting on material melted by fervent heat, were quite mistaken; that the liquifying power of the internal heat of the earth was so counteracted by pressure as to cause extreme solidity. "Rigid as steel" was indeed their favorite expression for the mass of our planet.

Curious, or not, and whatever may have been the theories, it is certain that, while the first intimation of the change occurred in April, 1894, by the end of May consternation had seized the "dwellers by the sea," and by mid-summer, ocean navigation was completely disorganized, foreign commerce ruined, domestic trade paralyzed. As the disturbance progressed manufacturing ceased, currency vanished, and panic held undisputed sway. But this anticipates.

There was, at first, little interference with the traffic of railroads, with the working of telegraphs or even ocean cables, and a convention of learned men, meeting at Washington on the invitation of the President, whose name was Cleveland, to discuss the phenomenon and advise the now alarmed Government as to its probable duration and scope—what, in short, to do about it—had no trouble in assembling. It was, however, but too soon made evident that there were

few men among them of original or independent thought; the facts had already been gathered by observers all over the country who had some common sense (if they were 'mere amateurs'), and there was much discussion of a somewhat bitter nature, not free from personalities.

There had been two schools, one called Uniformitarians and the other Cataclysmists.

The Uniformitarians had contended for a very slow rate of change, without any violent commotion. They could not deny that the North Cape in Norway was rising, but they said it was only four or five feet in a century, while the elevation was less to the southward of it, dying away to nothing at the Naze. They held it impossible, at this stage of the earth's history, for any notable growth to occur—that, in brief, however the hills may have skipped, whether like young rams or not, during the youth of the world, nothing of the sort could take place now—the ocean basins, with their great currents, the continental masses, with their mountain ranges, plateaux and river valleys, were fixed and stable, and no change was possible, except by miracle, while in miracles they utterly disbelieved. Little washings away of a sandy shore here, or a *coulée* there, were admitted; but this was like the growth of a twig or two in the forest, which was itself sempiternal, but for human agency, and that they believed but transient.

The Cataclysmists, on the other hand, contended that the earth had by no means arrived at a state of restfulness. They pointed, like their adversaries, to the geologic record. It proved, they said, its want of uniformity by its very imperfections, showing by the frequent super-imposition of a late stratum upon an old one, without a sign of intermediate layers, that elevations and depressions had never been continuous or even rhythmically alternate, but that irregular oscillation was the law. How could such move-