

may mention an association formed in 1798 in the city of New York, which assumed, as they expressed it, "the name and style of the American Mineralogical Society." It announced as its object "the investigation of the mineral and fossil bodies which compose the fabric of the globe, and more especially for the natural and chemical history of the minerals and fossils of the United States." The distinguished Dr. Samuel Latham Mitchill, who seems to have been a man of universal genius, was at once its first President, its librarian and its cabinet-keeper. The committee of the society issued a circular in which, while expressing themselves, "desirous of obtaining and diffusing by every means in their power a correct and extensive knowledge of the mineral treasures of their country, they earnestly solicited their fellow-citizens to communicate to them on all mineralogical subjects, but especially on the following, viz.:—

"Concerning the stones suitable to be manufactured into gun-flints: where are they found? and in what quantity? 2. Concerning native brimstone or sulphur or the waters or minerals whence it may be extracted? 3. Concerning saltpetre: where (if at all) found native? or the soils which produce it in the United States? 4. Concerning mines and ores of lead: in what places? the situation? how wide the vein? in what kind of rock it is bedded."

This warlike demand seems to call more for the discovery of the materials for national defence than for the advancement of science, and besides being a commentary on the spirit of the times, gives a rather humorous impression of their strangely inadequate conception of the science of mineralogy, and its possible bearings on practical life, but in justice to them I should add that it is further announced that "specimens of ores, metals, coals, spars, gypsums, crystals, petrifications, stones, earths, slates, clays, chalks, limestones, marbles and every fossil substances that may be discovered or fall in the way of a traveller, which can throw light on the mineralogical history of America, will be examined and analyzed without cost, sufficient pieces, with the owner's leave, being reserved for placing in the Society's collection." I have quoted the circular almost verbatim to give you some idea of the genuine though crude longings for knowledge felt by our early mineralogists, and also of the generous spirit in which they worked. A still more forcible picture of the ignorance of the time is given by the elder Professor Silliman in 1818, "Notwithstanding the