

The controversy of these two factions at last reached such a pitch that a new school gradually arose, which professed the utmost indifference to the views of both parties and determined to devote its labors to observation, ignoring theories entirely unless supported most strongly by facts obtained in the field, and to this end the researches of the members of the Geological Society of London, established in 1807, were largely devoted, and at length became instrumental in rescuing the science from the dangerous position into which it had been brought, largely by visionary enthusiasts, both in science and theology. Since the formation of this society, which forms one of the most important epochs in connection with the progress of the science, the study of geology has proceeded without due regard to the dictates of reason. The assistance of kindred sciences has been evoked, and while of necessity many changes have occurred in the interpretation of the several problems, these changes have been made after careful consideration of all the facts relating thereto, till now geology stands on the proud pedestal as one of the most useful and important of the sciences.

The generally accepted theory as to the earliest stages of the earth's history is that now known as the "Nebular Hypothesis." By this it is assumed that not only the earth but all the planets, together with the sun, and in fact all the celestial bodies, first existed as a gaseous mass. This in its revolution around a central axis from time to time threw off huge rings which, partaking of the motion of the original mass, gradually formed by condensation the planetary and stellar bodies, the remaining nucleus of our system still remaining as its sun and centre. The process of condensation and cooling proceeded gradually till in time the first crust of the earth was formed, and became covered with water, gradually also the first land rose from beneath the wave and from this point the beginning of the Geological record must be assumed. While therefore the discussion of this theory would be of great interest as well as of the views regarding the condition of the earth's interior we must be content with this brief notice and consider the divisions of geology proper and more particularly in reference to that branch of it known as historical or stratigraphical geology.

For purposes of convenience it has been found desirable to divide the portion of geological time which elapsed since the formation of the