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[FOR THE CRITIC.]

ARCHAIC HALIFAX.

Few of the people who hurry through the streets of Halifax ever bestow a single thought upon the widespread book of Nature which lies open beneath their feet. None, but perhaps some thoughtful geologist, who with bent head and hammer in hand, knocks loudly upon the rocks until they open and show him, written in unmistakable characters, the history of the long past ages. Long ago, the spot upon which the City of Halifax now stands, lay deep beneath the ocean; not even a low reef over which the waves could break, nothing but a moving expanse of water far as the eye could reach. Slowly, the long ages crept past, and gradually the hidden work of upheaval went on, until at last dry land in the shape of a few small, low-lying barren islands, most probably of white granite, raised their heads above the sea, and glistened for the first time in the light of the sun.

Geologists differ as to the age of the granites, but most probably they are the oldest formation, and the large stretch upon the west side of the Harbor which extends from Herring Cove to St. Margaret's Bay formed most likely the principal island. Another of lesser extent lay away to the eastward of the Harbor, while to the northward, Mount Uniacke formed an island which overlooked one or two smaller ones to the east of it. Slowly the land became uplifted, and as it rose and the water became more shallow, the wash of the waves obtained greater force, and by grinding and levelling the rocks formed extensive stretches of clay and sand.

The next change which took place was a complete metamorphosis of these sand and clay flats into whin and slate; this was effected by a convulsion of Nature, accompanied by great internal heat, so that the sand stretches were reduced to a compact flinty whin, and the clay to a smooth talcose slate. To this convulsion is due the number of large safe and picturesque harbors which indent our southern coast, Halifax Harbor ranking as one of the finest in the world.

It was during the commencement of this period that life began to dawn upon the earth, and was of the lowest marine order, of which few traces remain, except tracks of the worms that crawled through the primordial sands; these tracks may be seen at Black Rock, and at other places where the tide has been unable to reach and obliterate them.

Then came most probably one of the longest periods of inaction which have ever occurred in geological time; and while the southern coast of Nova Scotia was lying inactive, the whole continent of North America, together with the remainder of Nova Scotia (with the exception of some small portions which were of like age as the Nova Scotian granites), was in process of construction, until at the close of the era North America and Nova Scotia presented almost, if not exactly, the same coast line and general characteristics as at the present day.

During this long period of inactivity both animal and vegetable life had advanced from sea-weeds and the lowest orders of life, to the culmination of the animal kingdom, when the mastodon roamed through the primeval forest, pulling down the trees with his immense trunk, and chewing together both leaves and branches.

After the long rest came the Glacial Period, famous for high latitude movements, when the ice forming in the north within the Arctic circle pressed south in mighty masses thousands of feet thick, bending and conforming to the valleys and inequalities of the surfaces, and carrying with them large quantities of rock, gravel, and sand.

The origin of the glaciers is somewhat curious; the snow which lies above the region of perpetual frost, partly thawed during the summer months, and was converted into ice in the winter, and as large masses of ice collected in this manner, the pressure of the higher portions of the mass forced it in a southerly direction.

It is almost impossible to imagine the tremendous force and weight of the glaciers, but as we look at the mighty work that they have accomplished, we may form some slight idea of their enormous size.

The greater part of the islands which dot our Harbor are but spots where the glaciers have dropped their loads; the Citadel Hill, Camp Hill, and in fact all the clay and gravel banks in the vicinity are due to this cause.

In these banks of boulders and clay, called drift banks, may be found the most splendid specimens of trap rock, full of beautiful crystals. All the agates, jaspers, and amethysts that Blomidon is famed for, can be found at Halifax, only requiring a longer and more careful search than would be necessary in their native place, on account of the large quantities of debris through which they are mixed.

Away from the cold north came the glaciers upon their steady slow march, with torrents of water flowing beneath from the melting ice, which increased as they journeyed south, until minute rivulets ran from every crack and crevice, levelling and stratifying the debris. Steadily south they came, past Blomidon, grinding to mud the sand and gravel, smoothing and rounding the jagged pieces of rock which they had torn from their mountain resting places; on through the Gore, and principally through Halifax Harbor to the open sea, where they pushed out in long promontories until, broken off by storm and tide, they drifted seaward in the shape of icebergs, which, soon thawing in the warmer water, dropped their loads, and so formed the far-famed Banks of Newfoundland, and most probably Sable Island.

The marks or lines made by the glaciers may be seen at Point Pleasant in several places, but principally upon the exposed slaty stretch which surrounds the Prince of Wales' Tower.

These lines run approximately north and south-west, and were formed by portions of rock becoming frozen into the ice upon the underside of the glacier, which, as it moved, ground them into the bed rock, plunging furrows in the same manner as a graving tool; the ordinary depth of these strias is about half or a quarter of an inch, although sometimes they go to a depth of several feet.