

Groups of Fossiliferous Strata observed in Western Europe, arranged in what is termed a descending Series, or beginning with the newest. (See a more detailed Tabular view, pp. 104–108.)

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| 1. Post-Pliocene, including those of the Recent, or human period. | } | Tertiary, Supracretaceous,* or Cainozoic.† |
| 2. Newer Pliocene, or Pleistocene. | | |
| 3. Older Pliocene. | | |
| 4. Miocene. | | |
| 5. Eocene. | | |
| 6. Chalk. | } | Secondary, or Mesozoic. |
| 7. Greensand and Wealden. | | |
| 8. Upper Oolite, including the Purbeck. | | |
| 9. Middle Oolite. | | |
| 10. Lower Oolite. | | |
| 11. Lias. | | |
| 12. Trias. | } | Primary fossiliferous, or paleozoic. |
| 13. Permian. | | |
| 14. Coal. | | |
| 15. Old Red sandstone, or Devonian. | | |
| 16. Upper Silurian. | | |
| 17. Lower Silurian. | | |
| 18. Cambrian and older fossiliferous strata. | | |

It is not pretended that the three principal sections in the above table, called primary, secondary, and tertiary, are of equivalent importance, or that the eighteen subordinate groups comprise monuments relating to equal portions of past time, or of the earth's history. But we can assert that they each relate to successive periods, during which certain animals and plants, for the most part peculiar to their respective eras, have flourished, and during which different kinds of sediment were deposited in the space now occupied by Europe.

If we were disposed, on palæontological grounds,‡ to divide the entire fossiliferous series into a few groups less numerous than those in the above table, and more nearly co-ordinate in value than the sections called primary, secondary, and tertiary, we might, perhaps, adopt the six groups or periods given in the next table.

At the same time, I may observe, that, in the present state of the science, when we have not yet compared the evidence derivable from all classes of fossils, not even those most generally distributed, such as shells, corals, and fish, such generalizations are premature, and can only be regarded as conjectural or provisional schemes for the founding of large natural groups.

* For tertiary, Sir H. De la Beche has used the term "supracretaceous," a name implying that the strata so called are superior in position to the chalk.

† For an explanation of Cainozoic, see p. 95.

‡ Palæontology is the science which treats of fossil remains, both animal and vegetable. *Etym.* *παλαιος, palaios*, ancient, *οντα, onta*, beings, and *λογος, logos*, a discourse.