

a new phase in the cultivation of Geology here; it seems most fitting that we should look back for a little at the past development of the science in this part of the British Islands.

There was a time, still within the memory of living men, when a handful of ardent original observers here in Edinburgh carried geological speculation and research to such a height as to found a new, and, in the end, a dominant school of Geology. The history of the Natural Sciences, like that of Philosophy, has been marked by epochs of activity and intervals of quiescence. One genius, perhaps, has arisen and kindled in other minds the flame that burned so brightly in his own. A time of vigorous research has ensued, but as the personal influence that evoked it has waned, a period of feebleness or torpor has been apt to ensue, and to last until the advent of some new awakening. Such oscillations of mental energy have an importance and a significance far beyond the narrow limits of the country or city in which they may have been manifested. They form part of that long and noble record of the struggle of man with the forces of nature, and deserve the thoughtful consideration of all who have joined or who contemplate joining in that struggle. I propose on the present occasion to sketch the story of one of these periods of vigorous originality, which had its rising and its setting in this city—the story of what may be called the Scottish School of Geology. I wish to place before you, in as clear a light as I can, the work which was accomplished by the founders of that school, that you may see how greatly it has influenced, and is even now influencing, the onward march of the science. I do this in no vainglorious spirit, nor with any wish to exalt into prominence a mere question of nationality. Science knows no geographical or political