

were often about as unscientific as the myths for which they were substituted, may yet be claimed as the earliest pioneers of geology. The first stages of advance in theoretical opinions on these subjects may best be illustrated by a brief survey of the geological ideas to be found scattered through the literature of Greece and Rome.

Among the poets allusions abound to the popular interpretations of geological phenomena, wherein the influence of gods and heroes in altering the face of Nature became the subject of legend and myth. It is interesting to note the progress of the decay of these ancient superstitions and their replacement by more natural explanations, based upon actual observation of the present order of things. As an example of this transition, reference may be made to the various attempts to account for the remarkable defile of Tempe, which was one of the marvels in the scenery of Greece. The wide mountain-girdled plain of Thessaly was popularly believed to have once been covered with a lake which was ultimately drained by the kindly intervention of Poseidon, who himself split open the gorge in the encircling rocky barrier, whereby a passage was given for the escape of the stagnant waters to the sea. Later generations attributed the friendly act to Hercules. By the time of Herodotus, however, (B.C. 500) the supernatural had given way, in the minds of reflective men, to a natural interpretation of such features. Yet the Father of History, as was natural to his pious and reverential spirit, does not scornfully reject the long established belief. "That the gorge of Tempe," he says, "was caused by Poseidon is