

but in a few years Ramsay showed by a detailed examination of the distribution of fossils in the sedimentary strata that Darwin's suggestion must be accepted as an axiom in geological theory. Again, the great naturalist surmised that, before the deposition of the oldest known fossiliferous strata, there may have been antecedent periods, collectively far longer than from the date of these strata up to the present day, and that, during these vast, yet quite unknown, periods, the world may have swarmed with living creatures. But his contemporaries could only shrug their shoulders anew, and wonder at the extravagant notions of a biologist. But who nowadays is unwilling to grant the possibility, nay probability, of Darwin's surmise? Who can look upon the earliest Cambrian fauna without the strongest conviction that life must have existed on this earth for countless ages before that comparatively well-developed fauna came into existence? For this expansion of our geological vision, and for the flood of light which has been thrown upon geological history by the theory of evolution, we stand mainly indebted to Charles Darwin.

II. Although the value of organic remains as a means of identifying strata had been amply proved during the earlier half of last century, neither geologists nor palæontologists were then aware of the extent to which this chronological and stratigraphical test could be carried out in the practical classification of fossiliferous formations. They were content with the broad subdivisions, often to a large extent based on variations of sedimentary material, into which they arranged the geological record. Eventually, however,