

Thomas Webster (1773-1844), who was born in the Orkneys, studied architecture in London, and when twenty-six years old was engaged as clerk of the works to the Royal Institution, that was founded in 1799. The building in Albemarle Street was designed mainly by him; and the theatre, regarded by Faraday as 'almost perfect as a lecture room,' was pronounced to be the best of its kind in the kingdom.

Turning his attention to geology Webster pursued the subject with great zeal and success. Notable among his careful observations are those on the strata of the Isle of Wight and adjacent parts of Dorsetshire, with pictorial geological views, contributed to Sir Henry Englefield's folio work on those regions published in 1816; and of particular interest is his drawing of the remarkable fault in the Chalk cliffs of Purbeck, between Ballard Point and the Foreland. This disturbance, 'admirably described and figured by Webster,' has since been explained as a faulted monocline structure with considerable overthrust.¹

In 1841 Webster became the first professor of Geology in the 'London University,' as University College was then called; and he held that post until the close of his life.

The first volume of the Society's *Transactions* had been favourably criticised in the *Edinburgh Review* for November 1811.² The writer observed that there was no branch of science in which

'the co-operation of numbers is so essential, as that which has for its object the natural history of the globe itself. . . . The field of investigation is of such vast extent, the multitude of the facts so immense, and the difficulty of seizing their characteristic features and describing them with precision so great, that if many hands and many heads are not employed in the work, no progress at all can be expected.'

In the concluding portion of the essay, while 'congratulating the public on the institution of a society particularly devoted to geological researches,' it is suggested that they 'will not rest satisfied with observation, but will undertake

¹ A. Strahan, 'Geology of the Isle of Purbeck and Weymouth,' *Mem. Geol. Survey*, 1898, p. 214.

² Vol. xix. No. 37, p. 207.