

gress of the mineral materials of the earth, through various stages of change and revolution, affecting the strata which compose its surface; and discloses a regular order in the superposition of these strata; recurring at distant intervals, and accompanied by a corresponding regularity in the order of succession of many extinct races of animals and vegetables, that have followed one after another during the progress of these mineral formations; arrangements like these could not have originated in chance, since they afford evidence of law and method in the disposition of mineral matter; and still stronger evidence of design in the structure of the organic remains with which the strata are interspersed.

How then has it happened that a science thus important, comprehending no less than the entire physical history of our planet, and whose documents are co-extensive with the globe, should have been so little regarded, and almost without a name, until the commencement of the present century?

Attempts have been made at various periods, both by practical observers and by ingenious speculators, to establish theories respecting the formation of the earth; these have in great part failed, in consequence of the then imperfect state of those subsidiary sciences, which, within the last half century, have enabled the geologist to return from the region of fancy to that of