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SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OF AMERICAN GEOLOGY¹

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As we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, it is a pleasure to recall that this association sprang from the Association of American Geologists and Naturalists, that that association grew from the Association of American Geologists, and that that association in turn was initiated by a call from the Board of Geologists in control of the Geological Survey of New York. This evolution occupied a decade or more just previous to 1848, the date of the founding of this association. It may be convenient to think of the epoch we commemorate roundly as the latter half of the last century and the first quarter of the present century. I hasten to ask forgiveness beforehand for many shortcomings. The record is too rich to be compassed in an hour. A multitude of events of real importance must be passed without mention and those mentioned must be treated too briefly. I can only jump from peak to peak. I hope I shall have your sanction—or if not your pardon—for two general omissions, all formal attempt to give personal credit—which would require a volume—and all effort to pass judgment on questions about which our profession differs, though I shall endeavor to make clear such differences. One of the leading features of our memorial epoch is the extent to which unsettled questions have been developed and the earnestness with which we are struggling with them.

I. THE INCREASE OF GEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

If we could bring to mind a picture of the best geological library in America in 1848 and could realize at the moment all geologic values it contained and the stage of science it represented and could then also bring to mind and full realization the best geological library in America to-day, the contrast would go far to give a true measure of the progress of our science during the seventy-five years. This can only be done very imperfectly in imagination, but the thought may help toward the reality.

II. PROGRESS IN AREAL EXTENSION; GEOLOGIC SURVEYS

In the 30's and 40's of the last century, the establishment of state geological surveys followed one another.

¹ An address before the Section of Geology and Geography on December 28, 1923, the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

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