Gilbert regards them as impressions made upon the moon by the collision of gigantic meteorites.

More recently, Schmick, George Darwin, and Ebert have endeavoured to trace the surface conformation of the moon to the undulations of a magma originally in hot, flowing condition. Suess has also elucidated the present surface of the moon upon the basis of volcanic occurrences; he compares lunar surface forms with the internal seething and buoyancy of melted masses of mineral or metallic material, and in this way sets forth a genetic table of the various lunar forms.

Meteorites and Falling Stars.—Reports of stones and masses of iron fallen from the heavens may be traced into remote periods of antiquity. The oldest known account is a report in China in the year 644 B.C. The Phœnicians, Egyptians, and Greeks used to preserve meteor-stones in temples, and to do honour to them as visible signs sent them by their gods.

Pliny has recounted how at Ægos Potamos, in Thracia, in the year 476 B.C., a mass of iron fell, "as large as a chariot," and was afterwards said by Anaxagoras to have been a fragment broken from the sun.

Avicenna mentions reports of fallen stones from Egypt and Persia. There seems little doubt, according to Consul von Laurin (1845), that the sacred stone in the Kaaba of Mecca is a meteorite. Various accounts of meteorites in Germany date from the early Middle Ages. A fall of meteorites took place at Ensisheim, in Alsace, on the 7th November 1492, and the account describes how a hot mass of stone, 127 kilogrammes in weight, fell into a field of wheat, accompanied by violent noises and the appearance of fire. Emperor Maximilian I. commanded that the stone should be preserved in the Church of Ensisheim. During the French Revolution the stone was taken to Colmar, and was then considerably cut down, so that now the remnant returned to the Ensisheim church only weighs about 40 kilogrammes.

A full report was also given of a shower of meteorites that occurred at Crema, in Italy, in 1510 or 1511. Although the number of reports of fallen stones increased very greatly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the scientific opinion of that time made merry over the credulity of the people who imagined the stones fell from the heavens.

Stütz, for example, who was a director of the Natural History