

those famous layers of coal were deposited, the resource whence the present generation is supplied, and the remains of the earliest vegetable productions which ornamented the face of the globe. We find, from the trunks of ferns, whose impressions they have preserved, how much these ancient forests differed from the present.

We next arrive at those transitive formations in which primæval nature, a nature inanimate and solely mineral, seemed still to contend for empire with animated nature. Black limestone, and slates which only present crustacea and shells and species now extinct, are presented alternately with the remains of primitive formations, and announce to us the fact of our having reached the most ancient formations that it has been permitted to us to discover; those ancient foundations of the actual coating of the globe, the marble and primitive slates, the gneisses, and finally the granites.

Such is the exact arrangement of the successive masses with which nature has enveloped this earth. Geology has detected it by combining the lights of mineralogy with those furnished by the sciences of organic structure and existence; an order so new and pregnant with fact, that it has only been acquired since the actual proofs offered to observation have been preferred to fantastic systems, and contradictory conjectures, on the primary origin of the globe, and all those phenomena, which in no-wise resembling those to which we are accustomed, could neither detect therein, to throw a light on the facts, materials to produce it, or a touchstone to try and prove. Some years since, the majority of geologists might be compared to historians who were only interested in the history of France with regard to what passed amongst the Gauls before Julius Cæsar;