

date of its development, by the obliteration throughout entire mountain masses of all traces of organic structure. We are therefore entitled, on every principle of sound reasoning, to suspect, that for one case where we can positively establish the secondary origin of any set of crystalline strata, there are many others where the proofs of their modern origin have been destroyed.

A geologist whose observations had been confined to Switzerland might imagine that the coal measures were the most ancient of the fossiliferous series. When he extended his investigations to Scotland, he might modify his views so far as to suppose that the Old Red sandstone marked the beginning of the rocks charged with organic remains. He might, indeed, after a search of many years, admit that here and there some few and faint traces of fossils had been found, in still older slates, in Scotland; but he might naturally conclude that all pre-existing fossiliferous formations must be very insignificant, since no pebbles containing organic remains have yet been detected in the conglomerates of the Old Red sandstone. Great would be the surprise of such a theorist, when he learnt that in other parts of Europe, and still more remarkably in North America, a great succession of antecedent sets of strata had been discovered, capable, according to some of the ablest paleontologists, of constituting no less than three independent groups, which are each of them as important as the "Old Red" or Devonian system, and as distinguishable from each other by their organic remains. Yet it would be consistent with methods of generalizing not uncommon on such subjects, if he