

shells — those red-blooded, many-legged worms, resembling elongated centipedes, that wriggle with such activity among the mingled mud and water, as we turn over the stones under which they had sheltered. Were creatures such as these the lords of this lower ocean? Did they enter first on the stage, in that great drama of being in which poets and philosophers, monarchs and mighty conquerors, were afterwards to mingle as actors? Does the reader remember that story in the *Arabian Nights*, in which the battle of the magicians is described? At an early stage of the combat a little worm creeps over the pavement; at its close two terrible dragons contend in an atmosphere of fire. But even the worms of the Cambrian System can scarce be regarded as established. The evidence respecting their place and their nature must still be held as involved in some such degree of doubt as attaches to the researches of the antiquary, when engaged in tracing what their remains much resemble — the involved sculpturings of some Runic obelisk, weathered by the storms of a thousand winters. There is less of doubt, however, regarding the existences of the upper group of rocks — the Silurian.

The depth of this group, as estimated by Mr. Murchison, is equal to double the height of our highest Scottish mountains; and four distinct platforms of being range in it, the one over the other, like stories in a building. Life abounded on all these platforms, and in shapes the most wonderful. The peculiar encrinites of the group rose in miniature forests, and spread forth their sentient petals by millions and tens of millions amid the waters; vast ridges of corals peopled by their innumerable builders, — numbers without number — rose high amid the shallows; the chambered shells had become abundant — the simpler testacea still more so; extinct forms of the graptolite, or sea-pen, existed by myriads