

what are recognizably of sedimentary origin, likewise that they include and pass into masses that were certainly eruptive, have come to regard the schists as a metamorphic series of sedimentary and igneous rocks owing their characteristic foliated structure to some subsequent action upon them.

One of the chief causes of difficulty in discussing the history of these rocks has lain in the fact that the crystalline schists are, in the majority of cases, separated from all other geological formations by an abrupt hiatus.⁴⁸ Instead of passing into these formations, they are commonly covered unconformably by them, and have usually been enormously denuded before the deposition of the oldest overlying rocks. Hence, not only is there generally a want of continuity between the schists and younger formations, but the contrast between them, in regard to lithological characters and geotectonic structure, is often so exceedingly striking as naturally to suggest the idea that the schists must belong to a far earlier period than that of the oldest sedimentary formations of the ordinary type, and to a totally different order of physical conditions. Natural, however, as this conclusion may be, those who adopt it probably seldom realize to what an extent it rests upon mere assumption. Starting with the supposition that the crystalline schists are the result of geological operations that preceded the times when ordinary sedimentation began, it assumes that they belong to one great early geological period. Yet all that can logically be asserted as to the age of these rocks is that they must

⁴⁸ Many Continental geologists, however, believe that the foliation of the schists is usually parallel to the stratification of the immediately overlying sedimentary formations. See, for instance, the summary given by M. Michel-Lévy, *Bull. Soc. Geol. France*, xvi. 1888, p. 102.