

clusion that, although he did great service by the precision of his lithological characters and by his insistence on the doctrine of geological succession, yet that as regards geological theory, whether directly by his own teaching, or indirectly by the labours of his pupils and followers, much of his influence was disastrous to the higher interests of geology. The career of such a man, so full of contradictions, so preponderant in the studies to which it was devoted, and so momentous in its effects upon the progress of science in his own generation, merits the careful consideration of all who would realise how geology has gained its present place.

Werner was born on 25th September 1749 at Wehrau on the Queiss in Upper Lusatia.<sup>1</sup> His ancestors had been engaged in the iron industry of that region of Germany for some 300 years. His father was inspector of Count Solms' foundry, and at one time it seemed as though the future mineralogist were to carry on, in the same profession, the traditions of the family. From infancy he was familiar with stones. When still hardly able to speak, it was one of his favourite amusements to break down pieces of sandstone and marl. After he had begun to learn his alphabet, his father, as a reward for proficiency in his lessons, would allow him to look over a small collection of minerals which he kept in a box, and

<sup>1</sup> For the biographical details given in this sketch I am indebted partly to the "Kurzer Nekrolog Abraham Gottlob Werners," by K. A. Blöde, in the *Memoirs of the Mineralogical Society of Dresden*, vol. ii. (1819), p. 249, and partly to the *Éloge* on Werner by Cuvier. Blöde, who had access to family documents, gives 1749 as the year of Werner's birth; Cuvier and other authorities make it 1750.