

Hutton was unable to say how many of these revolutions may be chronicled among the rocks of the earth's crust.<sup>1</sup> Nor did he discover any method by which their general sequence over the whole globe could be determined.

A totally new pathway of investigation had now to be opened up. The part that had hitherto been played by species of minerals and rocks was henceforth to be taken by species of plants and animals. Organic remains, imbedded in the strata of the earth's crust, had been abundantly appealed to as evidence of the former presence of the sea upon the land, or as proofs of upheaval of the sea-floor. But they were now to receive far closer attention, until they were found to contain the key to geological history, to furnish a basis by which the past revolutions of the globe could be chronologically arranged and accurately described, and to cast a flood of light upon the history and development of organised life upon the surface of the earth.

Apart altogether from questions of cosmogony or of geological theory, some of the broad facts of stratigraphy could not but, at an early time, attract attention. In regions of little-disturbed sedimentary rocks, the superposition of distinct strata, one upon another, was too obvious to escape notice. A little travel with observant eyes would enable men to see that the same kinds of strata, accompanied by the

<sup>1</sup> Playfair thought that the revolutions may have been often repeated, and that our present continents appear to be the third in succession, of which relics may be observed among the rocks.—*Works*, vol. iv. p. 55.