

was believed by Werner to mark a new geognostic period when, instead of chemical precipitates, mechanical accumulations began to appear.

The two Wernerian terms *Transition* and *Greywacke* survived for some years after the commencement of the great stratigraphical impulse in the early years of last century. They formed a kind of convenient limbo or No-man's Land, into which any group of rocks might be thrown which obstinately refused to reveal its relations with the rest of the terrestrial crust. Down to the base of the Carboniferous rocks, or even to the bottom of the Old Red Sandstone, the chronological succession of geological history seemed tolerably clear. But beneath and beyond that limit, everything betokened disorder. It appeared well-nigh hopeless to expect that rocks so broken and indurated, generally so poor in fossils, and usually so sharply cut off from everything younger than themselves, would ever be made to yield up a connected and consistent series of chapters to the geological record.

And yet these chapters, if only they could be written, would be found to possess the most vivid interest. They would contain the chronicles of the earlier ages of the earth's history, and might perhaps reveal to man the geography of the first dry land, the sites of the most ancient seas, the positions of the oldest volcanoes, the forms of the first plants and animals that appeared upon the planet. There was thus inducement enough to attack the old rocks that contained within their stony layers such precious memorials.

It is not that the *Transition* rocks were entirely neglected. The keen interest awakened in fossils led