

PERMIAN PERIOD.

THE name "Permian" was proposed by Sir Roderick I. Murchison, in the year 1841, for certain deposits which are now known to terminate upwards the great primeval or Palæozoic Series.*

This natural group consists, in descending order, in Germany, of the Zechstein, the Kupfer-schiefer, Roth-liegende, &c. In England it is usually divided into Magnesian Limestone or Zechstein, with subordinate Marl-slate or Kupfer-schiefer, and Rothliegende. The chief calcareous member of this group of strata is termed in Germany the "Zechstein," in England the "Magnesian Limestone;" but, as magnesian limestones have been produced at many geological periods, and as the German Zechstein is only a part of a group, the other members of which are known as "Kupfer-schiefer" ("copper-slate"), "Roth-todt-liegende" (the "Lower New Red" of English geologists), &c., it was manifest that a single name for the whole was much needed. Finding, in his examination of Russia in Europe, that this group was a great and united physical series of marls, limestones, sandstones, and conglomerates, occupying a region much larger than France, and of which the Government of Perm formed a central part, Sir Roderick proposed that the name of Permian, now in general use, should be thereto applied.

Extended researches have shown, from the character of its embedded organic remains, that it is closely allied to, but distinct from, the carboniferous strata below it, and is entirely distinct from the overlying Trias, or New Red Sandstone, which forms the base of the great series of the Secondary rocks.

Geology is, however, not only indebted to Sir Roderick Murchison for this classification and nomenclature, but also to him, in conjunction with Professor Sedgwick, for the name "*Devonian*," as an equivalent to "Old Red Sandstone;" whilst every geologist knows that Sir R. Murchison is the sole author of the SILURIAN SYSTEM.

* See "Siluria," p. 14. *Philosophical Mag.*, 3rd series, vol. xix., p. 419.