

gation by the multiplication of local names than by the attempt to force identifications for which there is no satisfactory basis. Each country will have its own terminology for pre-Cambrian formations, until some way is discovered of correlating these formations in different parts of the globe.

Although where the stratigraphical succession is most complete the gneisses that rise from under the oldest sedimentary rocks have been found to pierce these rocks, and thus to be of later date; yet in most regions no such proof of posteriority is to be seen. The coarse banded gneisses are usually the foundations on which the stratified fossiliferous formations unconformably rest. There is thus an obvious advantage in treating these gneisses first in an account of pre-Cambrian rocks. I shall here follow this arrangement, and reserve for a later section a description of the sedimentary and igneous formations which intervene between the gneisses and the base of the Cambrian system.

1. *The lowest gneisses and schists*

It has often been remarked that one of the most singular features about the oldest known crystalline rocks is the sameness of their general mineral characters in all parts of the earth. Sedimentary formations constantly vary from country to country, but when we descend beneath their lowest members we come upon a wholly different group of rocks which retain with remarkable uniformity one general type of structure and composition. These rocks include massive materials such as granite, syenite, gabbro, diorite, and hornblende-rock. But even in these a tendency to a schistose arrangement can usually be observed. By far the most generally prevalent structure is a more or less