

By supposing the order already fixed and determined when it is really not, further inquiry is prevented, and propositions are taken for granted on the strength of a theoretical principle, that require to be ascertained by actual observation. It has happened to the Wernerian system, as it has to many other improvements; they were at first inventions of great utility; but being carried beyond the point to which truth and matter of fact could bear them out, they have become obstructions to all further advancement, and have ended with retarding the progress which they began with accelerating. This is so much the case in the instance before us, that when a Wernerian geognost, at present, enters on the examination of a country, he is chiefly employed in placing the phenomena he observes in the situations which his master has assigned to them in his plan of the mineral kingdom. It is not so much to describe the strata as they are, and to compare them with rocks of the same character in other countries, as to decide whether they belong to this or that series of depositions, supposed once to have taken place over the whole earth; whether, for example, they be of the Independent Coal or the Newest Floetz-trap formation, or such like. Thus it is to ascertain their place in an ideal world, or in that list of successive formations which have nothing but the most hypothetical existence:—it is to this object, unfortunately for true science, that the business of mineralogical observation has of late been reduced.”¹

So long as the great master at Freiberg lived, the loyalty of his attached pupils naturally kept them

¹ *Edin. Review*, vol. xviii. (1811), art. 3, pp. 96, 97.