

of the higher Transition rocks of Britain, and their relations to the overlying formations, can be distinctly seen. He pursued the chase northwards until he lost the old rocks under the Triassic plains of Cheshire. "For a first survey," he writes, "I had got the upper grauwacke, so called, into my hands, for I had seen it in several situations far from each other, all along the South Welsh frontier, and in Shropshire and Herefordshire, rising out gradually and conformably from beneath the lowest member of the Old Red Sandstone. Moreover, I had ascertained that its different beds were characterized by peculiar fossils, . . . a new step in British geology. In summing up what I saw and realised in about four months of travelling, I may say that it was the most fruitful year of my life, for in it I laid the foundation of my Silurian system. I was then thirty-nine years old, and few could excel me in bodily and mental activity."¹

Not only did the work of these four momentous months mark a new step in British geology. It began the lifting of the veil from the Transition rocks of the whole globe. It was the first successful foray into these hitherto intractable masses, and prepared the way for all that has since been done in deciphering the history of the most ancient fossiliferous formations, alike in the Old World and in the New.

Contenting himself with a mere announcement of his chief results at the first meeting of the British Association, held in York in 1831, Murchison gave a brief outline of his subdivisions of the Upper

¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 183, 192.