

exclaimed, "Oh, I'm not going to fight him!" The smile passed at once into a good laugh and general applause through the room.¹

The discussion was on the true place of the crystalline rocks that were found to overlie the Durness rocks; and Sedgwick supported his old associate with regard to the relative antiquity of the limestones and the red conglomerates.

The progress of knowledge in the mountainous region of Sutherland was naturally slow, and so long as no one realised the possibility of a flaw in the sequence, it is not surprising that all were misled by the seemingly clear succession, above the fundamental gneiss, of lower quartzite, Durness limestone and upper quartzite, passing into a newer series of flaggy gneisses and schists.

James Nicol was the first to perceive some of the main features in this region of great disturbance. He had worked with Murchison until 1855, and afterwards he laboured independently, examining the ground year after year, until in 1859 he brought his matured views before the British Association at Aberdeen, and elaborated them in a paper read before the Geological Society in December of the following year. A great contest took place at the Aberdeen meeting, with Murchison supported by Ramsay on the one side, and Nicol on the other. Nicol maintained that the upward succession was from the Highland gneisses and schists; that these were overlain unconformably by Torridon sandstone, and again by the Durness quartzites, furoid beds, and limestones. Moreover, he pointed out that abnormal appearances of sequence, in the 'Upper' quartzite and 'Newer' schistose rocks, were repetitions due to great foldings and displacements with upcast or overthrow faults, whereby older had been forced over newer rocks.²

These views were not accepted by Murchison, who received support also from Harkness. Nevertheless, with

¹ 'Life of Murchison,' vol. ii. 1875, p. 206.

² See J. W. Judd, Address to Section C, Brit. Assoc. 1885.