

still took for granted that in the lowest of these "Transition" or Silurian rocks, he had at length arrived at the much-wished-for termination of the fossiliferous series, and that nature had begun her work precisely at the point where his retrospect happened then to terminate.

It may be useful to inquire, whence arises this strong tendency to believe that the present limits of human knowledge in geological science exactly embrace that period of past time in which organic beings have flourished on the earth. If it be a very common delusion, there must be some cause for its popularity. Its source is, I believe, twofold; first, it is almost unavoidable that we should under-rate the magnitude of the subterranean changes now in progress at great depths in the earth's crust; and, secondly, that we should equally exaggerate the amount of those which took place far below the surface at former eras, especially those most remote from our times.

In regard to the first of these sources of error, we have of late years grown familiar with the proofs of great subsidence and upheaval of land in modern times, without sufficiently reflecting on the enormous alterations in the condition, and probably the structure, of the subjacent parts of the earth's crust, which are implied by these movements. The connection of such rising and sinking of the solid parts of the globe with volcanic action can be demonstrated in many places, and fairly inferred in others, where the action of subterranean heat, owing to its great depth, is latent. I have endeavoured elsewhere to explain the grounds which we have for inferring that crystal-