

must first find these rocks overlain by the oldest fossiliferous formations. Where no evidence of this kind is available, the use of precise terms, which are meant to denote a particular geological era, is undesirable. There seems good reason to believe that the asserted "Archæan" age of many tracts of schistose and granitoid rocks rests on no better basis than mere supposition, and that, as the study of regional metamorphism is extended, the so-called "Archæan" areas will be proportionately contracted.²

Several distinct systems of mineral masses can be shown in some regions to exist beneath the base of the Palæozoic formations, differing so greatly in petrological characters, in tectonic relations, and probably also in mode of formation, that they cannot, without a very unnatural union, be arranged in one definite stratigraphical series. For the present it seems to me least objectionable to adopt some vague general term which nevertheless expresses the only homotaxial relation about which there can be no doubt. For this purpose the designation "Pre-Cambrian," already in use, seems suitable. The rocks which I would embrace under this epithet may include a number of separate systems or formations which have little or nothing in common, save the fact that they are all older than the base of the Cambrian rocks. Until our knowledge of these ancient masses is much more extensive and precise than it is at present, I think it would be of advantage to avoid the

² Dr. Barrois thus expresses himself on this subject: "A great number of the rocks considered to be Archæan in Brittany are only metamorphosed Cambrian or Silurian rocks, having merely the facies of primitive rocks. We do not think that Brittany can be the only region where this is the case; on the contrary, it seems to us probable that the Palæozoic formations are destined to spread more and more over geological maps, at the expense of the 'primitive formations,' by assuming gneissic and schistose modifications."—*Ann. Soc. Geol. Nord.* xi. 1884, p. 139 (ante, p. 1014 *et seq.*)