

for the pre-Cambrian stratified formations. The evidence of fossils hardly as yet exists, and mere lithological characters are in such circumstances of little value. All that can be done at present is to work out the succession of rocks in each well-defined geographical and geological area, giving local names to the stratigraphical groups or systems that may be established, and trusting to future research for some method of possibly ascertaining the parallelism of these divisions in different parts of the world. Hence in the following summary of the characters of the pre-Cambrian rocks in the Old World and in the New no attempt will be made to adopt any general terminology, but in each country the names and divisions adopted there will be given.

§ ii. Local Development

Britain.—Much attention has been given in recent years to the pre-Cambrian rocks of the British Isles and a voluminous literature has arisen concerning them. Rocks, however, have been claimed as pre-Cambrian which are certainly eruptive masses of later date than parts of the Lower Silurian series. Others have been assigned to a similar position, though their relations to the older Palæozoic rocks cannot be seen; while others again cannot properly be disjoined from the lower portion of the Cambrian system. In the confusion which has thus been introduced it will be most satisfactory to restrict attention to those rocks and areas about the true relations of which there appears to be least room for dispute.

In no part of the European area are rocks of pre-Cambrian age more admirably displayed than in the northwest of Scotland. Their position there, previously indicated by Macculloch²³ and Hay Cunningham,²⁴ was first definitely

²³ "A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland," 1819.

²⁴ "Geognostical Account of the County of Sutherland," Highland Soc. Trans. viii. 1841, p. 73.