http://www.geology.19thcenturyscience.org/books/1839-Mantell-Geology/README.htm



*or vegetable mould* (4), which (as you may perceive from these specimens, collected a few years since,) is of a dark brown colour, contains a large proportion of earthy lignite, and, like the modern soil on the surface of the island, many water-worn stones. This layer is termed the *dirt-bed* by the workmen; and in and upon it are trunks and branches of coniferous trees, and plants allied to the recent *cycas* and *zamia*. Many of the trees, as well as the plants, are still erect, as if petrified while growing undisturbed in their native forests, having their roots in the soil, and their trunks extending into the upper limestone (see Tab. 69, 4). As the Portland stone lies beneath these strata, which are not much used for economical purposes, the fossil trees are removed, and thrown by as rubbish. On my visit to the island in the summer of 1832, the surface of a large area of the dirt-bed was cleared, preparatory to its removal, and a most striking phenomenon was presented to my view. The floor of the quarry was literally strewn with fossil wood; and I saw before me a petrified, tropical forest, the trees and the plants, like the inhabitants of the city in Arabian story, being converted into stone, yet still maintaining the places which they occupied when alive! Some of the trunks were surrounded by a conical mound of calcareous matter, which had evidently once been earth, and had accumulated around the bases and roots of the trees. The stems were generally three or four feet high, their summits