

peat mosses, or transformed, as in some of the harder strata, into stone. Let us imagine that we possessed sections of the trunks of a considerable number of trees, such as those occurring in the stratum called the *dirt-bed* in the Island of Portland. If we were to select a number of trees of about the same size, we should probably find many of them to have been contemporaries. This fact would be rendered probable if we observed, as we doubtless should do, on examining the annual rings, that some of them, conspicuous for their size, occurred at the same distances of years in several trees. If, for example, we found on several trees a remarkably large annual ring, followed at the distance of seven years by a remarkably thin ring, and this again, after two years, succeeded by another large ring, we should reasonably infer from these trees, that seven years after a season highly favourable to their growth, there had occurred a season unfavourable to them: and that after two more years, another very favourable season had happened, and that all the trees so observed had existed at the same period of time. The nature of the season, whether hot or cold, wet or dry, would be known with some degree of probability, from the class of tree under examination. This kind of evidence, though slight at first, receives additional and great confirmation by the discovery of every new ring which supports it; and, by a considerable concurrence of such observations, the succession of