

it is probable that the denuded members of the Cretaceous group once rested upon it there. The fact that a deposit should be found lying in contact with the gneiss, furnishes no argument for the great antiquity or the fundamental character of that deposit; and it were well that the geologist who sets himself to estimate the depth of the Old Red Sandstone, or the succession of its various formations, should keep the circumstance in view. That may be in reality but a small and upper portion of the system which he finds bounded by the gneiss on its under side, and by the diluvium on its upper.

We stand on a wooded eminence, that sinks perpendicularly into the river on the left, in a mural precipice, and descends with a billowy swell into the broad, fertile plain in front, as if the uplands were breaking in one vast wave upon the low country. There is a patch of meadow on the opposite side of the stream, shaded by a group of ancient trees, gnarled and mossy, and with half their topmost branches dead and white as the bones of a skeleton. We look down upon them from an elevation so commanding, that their uppermost twigs seem on well nigh the same level with their interlaced and twisted roots, washed bare on the bank edge by the winter floods. A colony of herons has built from time immemorial among the branches. There are trees so laden with nests that the boughs bend earthwards on every side, like the boughs of orchard trees in autumn; and the bleached and feathered masses which they bear — the cradles of succeeding generations — glitter gray through the foliage in continuous groups, as if each tree bore on its single head all the wigs of the Court of Session. The solitude is busy with the occupations and enjoyments of instinct. The birds, tall and stately, stand by troops in the shallows, or wade warily, as the fish glance by, to the edge of the current or rising, with