

## CHAPTER XIV.

The Cornstone Formation and its Organisms. — Dwarf Vegetation. — *Cephalaspides*. — Huge Lobster. — Habitats of the existing Crustacea. — No unapt representation of the Deposit of Balruddery, furnished by a land-locked Bay in the neighborhood of Cromarty. — Vast Space occupied by the Geological Formations. — Contrasted with the half-formed Deposits which represent the existing Creation. — Inference. — The formation of the *Holoptychius*. — Probable origin of its Siliceous Limestone. — Marked increase in the Bulk of the Existences of the System. — Conjectural Cause. — The Coal Measures. — The Limestone of Burdie House. — Conclusion.

THE curtain rises, and the scene is new. The myriads of the lower formation have disappeared, and we are surrounded, on an upper platform, by the existences of a later creation. There is sea all around, as before; and we find beneath a dark-colored, muddy bottom, thickly covered by a dwarf vegetation. The circumstances differ little from those in which the ichthyolite beds of the preceding period were deposited but forms of life, essentially different, career through the green depths, or creep over the ooze. Shoals of *Cephalaspides*, with their broad, arrow-like heads, and their slender, angular bodies, feathered with fins, sweep past like clouds of crossbow bolts in an ancient battle. We see the distant gleam of scales, but the forms are indistinct and dim: we can merely ascertain that the fins are elevated by spines of various shape and pattern; that of some the coats glitter with enamel; and that others — the sharks of this ancient period — bristle over with minute thorny points. A huge crustacean, of uncouth proportions, stalks over the weedy bottom or burrows in the hollows of the banks.