

attempted restoration of the probable scenes and events of the period, in what is now Scotland.

For many ages, a wide ocean, from which the eye fails to see any shore, or the sounding-lead to find any bottom, rolls over what is now our country. Its profound depths, wrapped up in darkness, sink beneath the zero line of animal or vegetable life; and the fine gray mud, or light micaceous sand, that settles upon its unseen bottom, as the impalpable dust that mottles the sunbeam sinks on the floor of some deserted hall or old haunted chamber, scarce forms, after the lapse of years, a layer as thick as the roofing slate into which, in these latter times, we find it consolidated. Gradually, however, and persistently, the deposition goes on. Besides, under the deep-seated impulsions of the Plutonic forces, vigorous in their early youth, there is a general rising of the platform. At length the light of day reaches it through the lessening space, in a dim green twilight, and it becomes a scene of organic existence. Vast fields of nameless algæ, still represented amid the rocks by our anthracite bands, embrown for many leagues the ocean bottom; and millions of zoöphytes, not higher in the scale than the modern pennatuladæ, which they not a little resemble, crowd every square rood of surface. And here, at wide intervals, some ancient terebratula fastens its fleshy cable to the rock, or there some lingula stands erect, flower-like, in its horny stem. There are changes taking place, now gradual, anon abrupt. At one time death itself serves but to furnish fresh platforms for new life; at another, through some subsidence in the general floor, the zero line of vitality is again reached, and overperished myriads, the dead, sluggish strata settle down. At length, when unreckoned centuries — mayhap hundreds of centuries — have passed, the middle ages of the Lower Silurian period are ushered in; and when the Llandeilo flags and Bala limestones are in the course of deposition in what is now the