

yet seen are too obscure to admit of certain determination. I may here mention, that curious markings, which have been regarded as impressions made by vegetables that had themselves disappeared, have been detected during the last twelve-month in a quarry of the Lower Old Red Sandstone near Huntly, by the Rev. Mr Mackay of Rhynie. They are very curious and very puzzling ; but though some of the specimens present the appearance of a continuous midrib, that throws off, with a certain degree of regularity, apparent leaflets, I am inclined to regard them rather as lying within the province of the ichnologist than of the fossil botanist. They bear the same sort of resemblance to a long, thickly-leaved frond, like that of the "hard fern," that the cast of a many-legged annelid does to a club-moss ; and I was struck, on my first walk along the Portobello beach, after examining a specimen kindly sent me by Mr Mackay, to see how nearly the tract of a small shore-crab (*Carcinus Mænas*) along the wet sand resembled them, in exhibiting what seemed to be an obscure midrib fringed with leaflets.

But the genuine vegetable organism of the formation, indicative of the highest rank of any yet found in it, is a true wood of the cone-bearing order. I laid open the nodule which contains this specimen, in one of the ichthyolite beds of Cromarty, rather more than eighteen years ago ; but though I described it, in the first edition of my little work on the Old Red Sandstone, in 1841, as exhibiting the woody fibre, it was not until 1845 that, with the assistance of the optical lapidary, I subjected its structure to the test of the microscope. It turned out, as I had anticipated, to be the portion of a tree ; and on my submitting the prepared specimen to one of our highest authorities,—the late Mr William Nicol,—he at once decided that the "reticulated texture of the transverse section, though somewhat compressed, clearly indicated a coniferous origin." I may add, that this