

The Old Red Sandstone rocks are composed of schists, sandstone, and limestones. The line of demarcation between the Silurian rocks and those which succeed them may be followed, in many places, by

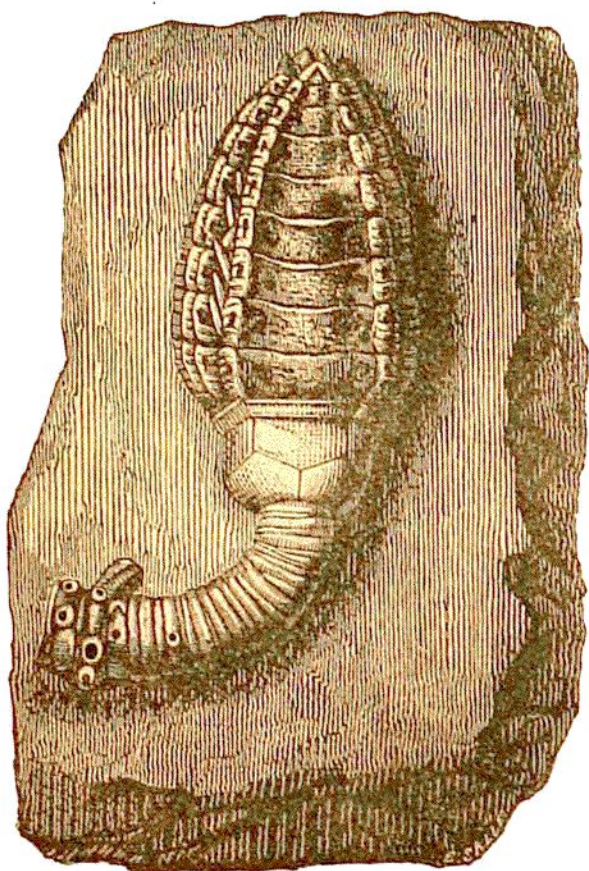


Fig. 35.—*Cupressocrinus crassus*.

the eye; but, on a closer examination, the exact limits of the two systems become more difficult to fix.

The beds of the one system pass into the other by a gradual passage, for Nature rarely admits of violent contrasts, and shows few sudden transitions. By-and-by, however, the change becomes very decided, and the contrast between the dark grey masses at the base and the superincumbent yellow and red rocks become sufficiently striking. In fact, the uppermost beds of the Silurian rocks are the passage-beds of the overlying system, consisting of flagstones, occasionally reddish, and called in some districts "tile-stones." Over these lie the Old Red Sandstone conglomerate, the Caithness flags, and the great superincumbent mass which forms the upper portion of the system.

Though less abrupt than the eruptive and Silurian mountains, the Old Red Sandstone scenery is, nevertheless, distinguished by its imposing outline, assuming bold and lofty escarpments in the Vans of Brecon, in Grongar Hill, near Caermarthen, and in the Black Mountain of Monmouthshire, in the centre of a landscape which wood, rock, and river combine to render perfect. But it is in the north of Scotland where this rock assumes its grandest aspect, wrapping its mantle round the loftiest mountains, and rising out of the sea in rugged and fantastic masses, as far north as the Orkneys. In Devon and Cornwall, where the rocks are of a calcareous, and sometimes schistose or slaty character, they are sufficiently extensive to have given a name to the series, which is recognised all over the world.

In Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, and South Wales, the Old Red Sandstone is largely developed, and sometimes attains the thickness of from 8,000 to 10,000 feet, divided