

be covered, two seasons hence, with flowers and fruit. That strangely formed organism presents no existing type among all the numerous families of the vegetable kingdom.* There is an amazing luxuriance of growth all around us. Scarce can the current make way through the thickets of aquatic plants that rise thick from the muddy bottom; and though the sunshine falls bright on the upper boughs of the tangled forest beyond, not a ray penetrates the more than twilight gloom that broods over the marshy platform below. The rank steam of decaying vegetation forms a thick blue haze, that partially obscures the underwood; deadly lakes of carbonic acid gas have accumulated in the hollows; there is silence all around, uninterrupted save by the sudden splash of some reptile fish that has risen to the surface in pursuit of its prey, or when a sudden breeze stirs the hot air, and shakes the fronds of the giant ferns or the catkins of the reeds. The wide continent before us is a continent devoid of animal life, save that its pools and rivers abound in fish and mollusca, and that millions and tens of millions of the infusory tribes swarm in the bogs and marshes. Here and there, too, an insect of strange form flutters among the leaves. It is more than probable that no creature furnished with lungs of the more perfect construction could have breathed the atmosphere of this early period, and have lived.

Doubts have been entertained whether the limestone of Burdie House belongs to the Upper Old Red Sandstone or to the inferior Coal Measures. And the fact may yet come to be quoted as a very direct proof of the ignorance which obtained regarding the fossils of the older formation, at a time when the organisms of most of the other formations, both above and below it, had been carefully explored. The Limestone of Burdie House is unequivocally and most characteristically a Coal Measure limestone. It abounds in vegetable