

around; the distant hills, bald, verdureless, and hoary, seem the hills of a worn-out and desolate planet, and harmonize well with the deserted ruins and the dark, lonely lake beneath; and altogether so impressive and unique is the scene, that, when I first looked upon it through the lurid haze of a stormy evening, it seemed suggestive of universal death and extinction, and the lifeless old age of creation. According to the poet,—

“The sun’s eye had a lightless glare;
The earth with age was wan.”

I have already referred to M’Culloch’s supposed organisms of the bed of quartz rock which underlies the Limestone. Other supposed organisms of, as has been thought, a less equivocal character, also occur in the deposit, though I failed to detect them in this neighborhood, where, however, they are said to be found, though more rarely than on the northern coast of Sutherland, on the shores of Loch Eriboll. I visited that locality in the previous year, mainly that I might acquaint myself with what at the time were deemed the most ancient of Scottish fossils,—these supposed organisms; but though, under the intelligent guidance of Mr. Clark, of Eriboll, I succeeded in finding them, I found the evidence regarding both their place and character of a very unsatisfactory kind. They occur not *in situ*, but in detached boulders spread over a limestone district, though derived apparently from the neighboring quartz rock. Unlike, however, the quartz rock of Assynt, the stone yields to the weather, in consequence, it would seem, of a considerable admixture of iron in its composition. In breaking open a boulder, we see an oxydized, discolored ring running parallel to its outer surface; and it is almost always in the discolored ring that the supposed fossils occur. They are small tubular bodies, from one to three lines in length, by about half a line in breadth, of a grayish or brownish-white