

base of the formation rests immediately against the Hill ; and we may trace the edges of the various overlaying beds for several hundred feet outwards, until, apparently near the top of the deposit, we lose them in the sea. The various beds—all save the lowest, which consists of a blue adhesive clay—are composed of a dark shale, consisting of easily-separable laminæ, thin as sheets of pasteboard ; and they are curiously divided from each other by bands of fossiliferous limestone of but from one to two feet thick. These Liasic beds, with their separating bands, are a sort of boarded books ; for as a series of volumes reclining against a granite pedestal in the geological library of nature, I used to find pleasure in regarding them. The limestone bands, elaborately marbled with lignite, ichthyolite, and shell, form the stiff boarding ; the pasteboard-like laminæ between,—tens and hundreds of thousands in number in even the slimmer volumes,—compose the closely-written leaves. I say closely written ; for never yet did signs or characters lie closer on page or scroll than do the organisms of the Lias on the surface of these leaf-like laminæ. I can scarce hope to communicate to the reader, after the lapse of so many years, an adequate idea of the feeling of wonder which the marvels of this deposit excited in my mind, wholly new as they were to me at the time. Even the fairy lore of my first-formed library,—that of the birchen box,—had impressed me less. The general tone of the coloring of these written leaves, though dimmed by the action of untold centuries, is still very striking. The ground is invariably of a deep natural gray, verging on black ; while the flattened organisms, which present about the same degree of relief as one sees in the figures of an embossed card, contrast with it in tints that vary from opaque to silvery white, and from pale yellow to an umbrine or chestnut brown. Groups of ammonites appear as if drawn in white chalk ; clusters of a minute undescribed bivalve are still plated with thin films of the silvery nacre ; the mytilaceæ usually bear a warm tint of yellowish brown, and must have been brilliant shells in their day ; gryphites and oysters are always of a dark gray, and plagiostomæ ordinarily of a blueish or neutral tint. On some