

of the vessel in which the ancient mariner performed his voyage of peril and prodigy, to

‘ Brown skeletons of leaves that lay
The forest brook along,
When the ivy tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below ;’

and you must have often marked the extreme delicacy of those deposited leaves, macerated during the winter season at the bottom of some woodland pool, which suggested the poet's simile. In that Tertiary period to which the leaf-beds of Mull belong, it would seem that extensive forests, chiefly of deciduous trees, shed year after year their summer coverings of leaves, some of which fell, and some of which were blown by the autumnal gusts, into the streams of the country, and were swept down by the current to lakes or estuaries, where they lay gradually resolving into such brown skeletons as caught the eye of Coleridge. We learn further, that there were forces active at the time, of which at any later period we have had no examples in the British islands. One of the leaf-beds described by his Grace is overlaid by a bed of volcanic ashes or tuff seven feet thick ; another by a bed of similar ashes mixed with chalk flints, twenty feet thick ; and yet another—the topmost layer—bears over it a bed of overflowing columnar basalt, forty feet thick. The volcanic agencies were active in what is now Scotland during the ages of its Tertiary forests.

The only Tertiary fossils of Scotland yet discovered are these forest and fern leaves of the Mull deposits. Their place in the great geologic division to which they belong is still definitely to fix ; but some of our higher geologists are, I find, disposed to refer them to the second Tertiary or Miocene epoch, though with considerable hesitation. They belong, it is probable, to a period not very widely removed from that of the richly fossiliferous Marlstone of *Œningen*, on the banks of the Rhine, with its vast abundance of