

long work of some laborious chronicler,—may have *no* economic importance in the lower and humbler sense, and may yet form a valuable record of bygone transactions and events suited to delight and instruct throughout all generations. And it is thus with the Oolitic deposits of Scotland. Their innumerable strata, closely written ‘within and without’ in a language in which every character is an organism, form the leaves of a record in which many of the marvellous existences that flourished during what are geologically the middle ages of our country’s history are well and wonderfully preserved. Instead of dissipating your attention by describing at length the fossils of its various deposits, I shall attempt giving you a general idea of the whole under the ordinary division of animal and vegetable, as they have come to my knowledge during the researches of at least thirty years.

In one of its features the Oolitic flora of what is now Scotland must have resembled its flora in the present, or rather in the past age, ere our native pine-woods had yielded to the axe. Trees of the fir or pine division of the Coniferæ, many of them of slow growth and large size, must have formed huge forests in a province of the land of the Oolite which extended from what is now the island of Mull to the Ord Hill of Caithness. The Scur of Eigg, a sub-ærial mole of columnar pitchstone, four hundred feet in height, and perched on the ridge of a tall hill, rests on the remains of a prostrated forest, as some of our submarine moles rest on foundations of piles. And of this forest all the trees seem to have consisted of one species,—a conifer of the Oolite now known to the fossil botanist as the *Pinites Eiggensis*, or Eigg pine. Branches and portions of the trunks of a similar pine are not unfrequent in the Lias of Eathie and Ross; and in shale-beds of the Lower Oolite in the neighbourhood of Helmsdale there occur in abundance fossil trunks and branches, mingled with cones and the narrow spiky leaflets characteristic of the family. I have