

rival in size larches of some twenty or thirty years' growth. In referring to yet other families, we can avail ourselves—so *outré* are their forms—of no resemblance at all: we can simply figure and describe, and draw our illustrative comparisons, if we employ such, rather from the departments of art than of nature. It is possible that, were some of our higher botanists—our Balfours, Browns, and Grevilles—permitted to range for a day over the broad plains of Jupiter, or amid the bright sunshiny vales of Mercury or Venus, even *they* might be but able to tell us, on their return, of gorgeous floras, that defied all their old rules of classification, and which could be illustrated from that of our own planet only by distant resemblances and remote analogies. And assuredly such would be the case, could they, through the exercise of some clairvoyant faculty, be enabled to journey for millions and millions of years into the remote past, and to spend a few enchanted hours amid the dense and sombre thickets of a Carboniferous forest. Shall I venture on communicating to this audience a snatch of personal history, illustrative of the mode in which I myself arrived, many years ago, at my earliest formed conceptions regarding the old flora of the Coal Measures?

The first perusal of *Gulliver's Travels* forms an era in the life of a boy, if the work come in his way at the right time; and I was fortunate enough to secure my first reading of it at the mature age of eight years. For weeks, months, years after, my imagination was filled with the little men and little women, and with at least one scene laid in the country of the very tall men,—the scene in which Gulliver, after wandering amid grass that rose twenty feet over his head, lost himself in a vast thicket of barley forty feet high. I became the owner, in fancy, of a colony of little men: I had little men for inhabiting the little houses which I built, for tilling my little apron-breadth of a garden, and for sailing my little ship; and, coupling with the men of Lilliput