

the scene in Brobdingnag, I often set myself to imagine, when playing truant all alone on the solitary slopes or amid the rocky dells of Drieminorie, how the little creatures, who were sure always to accompany me on these occasions, would be impressed by the surrounding vignette-like scenes and mere picturesque productions, exaggerated on hill and in hollow, by their own minuteness, into great size. I have imagined them threading their way through dark and lofty forests of bracken fifty feet high, or admiring on the hill-side some enormous club-moss, that stretched out its green hairy arms over the soil for whole roods, or arrested at the edge of some dangerous and dreary morass by hedges of gigantic horsetail, that bore atop their many-windowed, club-like cones, twenty feet over the dank surface, and that shot forth at every joint their green verticillate leaves in rings huge as coach-wheels. And while I thus thought, or rather dreamed, for my Lilliputian companions, I became for the time a Lilliputian myself,—saw the minute in nature as if through a magnifying-glass,—roamed in fancy under ferns that had shot up into trees,—and saw the dark cones of the Equisetaceæ stand up over their spiky branches some six yards or so above head. But these day-visions belonged to an early period: dreams of at least a severer, if not more solid cast, dispossessed the little men and women of the place they had occupied; and I had learned to think of the wondrous tale of Swift as one of the most powerful but least genial of all the satires which the errors and perversions of poor human nature have ever provoked, when in the year 1824 I formed my first practical acquaintance with the flora of the Coal Measures. I was engaged as a stone-cutter, a few miles from Edinburgh, in making some additions in the old English style to an ancient mansion-house; and the stone in which I wrought,—a curiously variegated sandstone derived from a quarry since shut up,—was, I soon found, exceedingly rich in organic casts and impressions.