in the form of beds of arenaceous mud, largely charged with organic matter. They abound in minute ripple-markings, which could have been formed only a few feet, or at most a few fathoms, under the surface; and between these rippled bands, for a series of beds together, there occur bands which had been evidently subjected to a drying process, so that, as happens with the bottom of a muddy pool laid dry during the summer droughts, they cracked into irregularly polygonal divisions, and as, when again submerged, a sudden deposition filled up the cracks, we can still trace these marks of desiccation as distinctly in the stone as if they had been made by the sun of the previous week. Hall of Leicester spoke, in one of his illustrations, of 'a continent of mud;' and it would seem that in the earlier ages of the Old Red Sandstone continents of mud were not mere figures of speech; but that over dark-hued and shallow seas, mud-banks of vast extent occasionally raised their flat dingy backs, and remained hardening in the hot sun until their oozy surfaces had cracked and warped, and become hard as the sun-baked brick of eastern countries; and that then, ere the seeds of terrestrial plants, floated from some distant island, or wafted in the air, had found time to strike root into the crevices of the soil, some of the frequent earth-tremors of the age shook the flat expanse under the water out of which it had arisen, and the waves rippled over it as before. The features of a scene so tame and unattractive, —features which none of the poets, save perhaps the truthful Crabbe, would have ventured to portray,—will not strike you as very worthy of preservation: there is certainly not much to excite or gratify the fancy in a scene of wide yet shallow seas, here and there darkened by forests of algæ, and here and there cumbered by archipelagos of flat verdure-less islands of mud that harden in the sun; but, regarded as embryo and rudimentary land, even these mud-banks may be found to possess their modicum of interest. And