

flora of the Coal Measures began to be, there existed in considerable abundance a stately fern, the *Cyclopteris Hibernicus* (see fig. 2), of mayhap not smaller proportions than our monarch of the British ferns, *Osmunda regalis*, associated with a peculiar lepidodendron, and what seems to be a lepidostrobus,—possibly the fructiferous spike or cone of the latter, mingled with carbonaceous stems, which, in the simplicity of their texture, and their abundance, give evidence of a low but not scanty vegetation. Ere passing to the luxuriant carboniferous flora, I shall make but one other remark. The existing plants whence we derive our analogies in dealing with the vegetation of this early period, contribute but little,

Fig. 13.



FERN? of Lower Old Red Sandstone.

*Orkney.*

(Nat. size.)

if at all, to the support of animal life. The ferns and their allies remain untouched by the grazing animals. Our native club-mosses, though once used in medicine, are positively deleterious; the horsetails, though harmless, so abound in silex, which wraps them round with a cuticle of stone, that they are rarely cropped by cattle; while the thickets of fern which cover our hill-sides, and seem so temptingly rich and