

fluted stems of gigantic club-mosses, the scarred and pitted trunks of extinct tree-ferns, diversify, by turns, the crayon sketchings of the dusky ceiling. Prostrate, all ! They have stood erect ; the soil has held them by their spreading roots, the genial sunlight has warmed them, the vital breeze has fanned their verdant foliage ; change, which transforms all things, has swept over them, and graceful fern and giant club-moss, slender reed and arrogant conifer, have laid down together in their couch of sediment, and the old sexton, Time, has piled upon them the accumulated ashes of a hundred succeeding generations of trees, and herbs, and perished populations. What a store-house of suggestions is here ! The dusty "Catacombs" are less eloquent in their inscriptions ; the vaults of the Pyramids recite a history less full of meaning. To the soul that holds communion with the visible ideas that dwell about him, these rocky walls are vocal with narratives of earthquake and flood, of nodding verdure and of desolating surge ; these shales are the tombstones of generations, on which are inscribed chronologies whose minutes are the cycles of the Hindoo. Here is the populous abode of world-ideas. Through these dim avenues flit spectres of the ancient thoughts which were once the acting energies of our planet. Here is the real Acherontian realm. He who has descended to these subterranean halls, and held converse with the forms which here abide, has visited a world and communed with intelligences of which Anchisiades had only dreamed.

Shall we venture to translate the histories recorded upon these rocky leaves ? What were the scenes and events of that epoch of the world when these buried vegetable forms were living, growing organisms, and Nature was storing away for the human race these magazines of fuel ?