

House. Perhaps some may still remain to be noticed among the central and northern members of the Orkney Islands. It seems to have been a singular and local outburst of volcanic energy during Upper Old Red Sandstone times—the only one yet discovered to the north of the Highlands. The uppermost bar, then, of the pedestal on which the Old Man has taken his stand is a massive sheet of lava.

The lower bar belongs to a very different period, and has a totally dissimilar history. Its component strata have been upturned and worn away before the eruption of the lava, which had rolled over their broken and bared edges. On looking more closely into these strata, which, even seen from the sea, present such a contrast in disposition to the lava and overlying sandstones, we find that they consist of dark thin-bedded sandstones, shales, and impure limestones. In short, they are a portion of the great series of deposits known as the Caithness flagstones of the Lower Old Red Sandstone. From many of their exposed surfaces shining jet-black scales, bones, and teeth of the characteristic fishes of these flagstones project. What a suggestive picture of the imperfection of the geological record is presented to us by some of these weather-beaten or surf-worn sheets of rock! We pick up from their crannies broken whelks, nullipores, and corallines, tossed up by the last storm from the zones of life now tenanted the sea below us. The limpet and sea-anemone, the whelk and barnacle, are clinging to the hardened sand over which, while it was still soft, the *Osteolepis* and *Coccosteus* and their bone-cased brethren disported in the ancient northern lake of Lower Old Red Sandstone times. Nay, we may now and then watch a living mollusc creeping over the cuirass of a palæozoic fish. Yet who can realise the lapse of time which here separates the living from the dead?