

CHAPTER III.

THE ERIAN OR DEVONIAN FORESTS—ORIGIN OF PETROLEUM—THE AGE OF ACROGENS AND GYMNOSPERMS.

IN the last chapter we were occupied with the comparatively few and obscure remains of plants entombed in the oldest geological formations. We now ascend to a higher plane, that of the Erian or Devonian period, in which, for the first time, we find varied and widely distributed forests.

The growth of knowledge with respect to this flora has been somewhat rapid, and it may be interesting to note its principal stages, as an encouragement to the hope that we may yet learn something more satisfactory respecting the older floras we have just discussed.

In Goeppert's memoir on the flora of the Silurian, Devonian, and Lower Carboniferous rocks, published in 1860,* he enumerates twenty species as Silurian, but these are all admitted to be Algæ, and several of them are remains which may be fairly claimed by the zoölogists as zoöphytes, or trails of worms and mollusks. In the Lower Devonian he knows but six species, five of which are Algæ, and the remaining one a *Sigillaria*, but this is of very doubtful nature. In the Middle Devonian he gives but one species, a land-plant of the genus *Lepidodendron*. In the Upper Devonian the number rises to fifty-seven, of which all but seven are terrestrial plants, representing

* Jena, 1860.