

more than equals the height of our loftiest Scottish mountains. It would seem as if a period equal to that in which all human history is comprised might be cut out of a corner of the period represented by the Lower Old Red Sandstone, and be scarce missed when away; for every year during which man has lived upon earth, it is not improbable that the *Pterichthys* and its contemporaries may have lived a century. Their last hour, however, at length came. Over the dark-colored ichthyolitic schists so immensely developed in Caithness and Orkney, there occurs a pale-tinted, unfossiliferous sandstone, which in the island of Hoy rises into hills of from fourteen to sixteen hundred feet in height; and among the organisms of those newer formations of the Old Red which overlie this deposit, not a species of ichthyolite identical with the species entombed in the lower schists has yet been detected. In the blank interval which the arenaceous deposit represents, tribes and families perished and disappeared, leaving none of their race to succeed them, that other tribes and families might be called into being, and fall into their vacant places in the onward march of creation.

Such, so far as the various hieroglyphics of the pile have yet rendered their meanings to the geologist, is the strange story recorded on the three-barred *pyramid* of Stromness. I traced the formation upwards this evening along the edges of the upturned strata, from where the Great Conglomerate leans against the granite, till where it merges into the ichthyolitic flagstones; and then pursued these from older and lower to newer and higher layers, desirous of ascertaining at what distance over the base of the system its more ancient organisms first appear, and what their character and kind. And, embedded in a grayish-colored layer of hard flag, somewhat less than a hundred yards over the granite, and about a