tion from type to type. We glimpse the stalking forms of bird-like reptiles as we uncover the tracks which they made in the world's middle ages; but we drop the curtain to raise it again in another scene.

XXX. LONE BURIALS IN THE COAL LANDS.

COAL-MEASURE FOSSILS.

STILL deeper in the series of strata which compose the upper portion of the earth's crust, we come to the coal-beds which were described in Talk XXVI. We wish now to consider very briefly the organic forms which the coal strata inclose. We refer here to coal strata of "Carboniferous Age," such as found in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains—excepting the Richmond and Deep River fields in Virginia and North Carolina. You will remember that we detected evidences of the vegetable origin of the coal. We conclude that it was formed from trees and herbaceous plants which had grown in the places where the coal accumulated. Generally, that ancient vegetation has become broken, comminuted and decayed—like the forest leaves gathered in a pile and left to the influence of the weather during one or two seasons. Still, many distinct traces of the coal-plants lie bedded in the formless rubbish of the ancient forest. Pressed upon the black surfaces of the shales are innumerable traceries of fern fronds, with all the sharpness of pinnations and bipinnations, their serrations and acuminations, as neatly preserved as if gathered last week from the forest and pressed by careful hands for the herbarium. It is an interesting sight; it fills our minds with reflections. Down four hundred feet in the solid earth, reposing in darkness and silence through all the ages of our human history, have these elegant pictures been lying—forms out of a vanished world—types of times which passed while terrestrial life was still in its infancy, and vegetation had not yet learned to blossom in the hues of the violet and the rose.