

water of a shallow lake is gradually displaced by the growth of marsh-plants, creeping steadily from the margin to the centre, until a surface of matted vegetation has been formed that extends treacherously over the water. This process may be seen going on in many parts of the country. So rapidly does it sometimes advance, that the sheet of water becomes almost visibly smaller every year, while the encircling morass gains in proportion. Such seems to have been the origin of not a few of our peat-mosses, and especially of the older ones. The pools and lakes formed by the unequal accumulation of the boulder-clay and other deposits of the Glacial period, have, in the vast majority of cases, passed into basins of peat. Their disappearance would largely depend upon their relative size and depth; the smaller and shallower being the first to be filled up. That some of them were still sheets of water when man was living in the island, is proved by the canoes which have been found beneath peat-mosses, lying on the sandy or muddy floor of the old lakes.

Peat-mosses not only mark the site of lochs and tarns; some of them cover the ruins of ancient woodlands. That some mosses in Scotland have sprung up after the destruction of forests which once grew there, is shown by the trunks and branches of trees which are found among the lower parts of the peat. It was, indeed, the destruction of the forests that gave rise to the mosses. A large number of trees prostrated at the same time and left to rot on the ground would intercept the runnels and surface drainage. In this manner, stagnant swamps would be formed, in which water-mosses would readily take root; and, by degrees, peat would accumulate. There are several ways in which a forest may be destroyed and turned into a peat-moss. The growth of a thick mass of wood for many suc-