

cessive centuries on the same spot tends to impoverish the soil, and, in the natural course of events, the trees must decay and give way to other races of plants, which will draw nourishment from the mouldering trunks. And thus, on tracts which at one period bore a dense array of wood, there might spring up in later ages wide, brown morasses and peat-bogs. Again, when a hurricane, sweeping across the country, has uprooted many trees, the fallen trunks and rotting leaves, by collecting moisture and facilitating the growth of marshy vegetation, may in like manner give rise to a peat-moss. Or the weight of snow in a severe winter may be so great as to break the branches, and even drag down the trees upon each other: '*nec jam sustineant onus sylvæ laborantes.*' Or, lastly, man, armed with axe and hatchet, may come and fell oak and beech and pine, taking, it may be, little or none of the wood away, but leaving it there to rot, and to gather around and over it a mantle of peat-forming plants.

Peat-mosses have probably arisen in each of these ways in Scotland. In the Forest of Mar, Aberdeenshire, large trunks of Scotch fir, which fell from age and decay, were soon immured in peat, formed partly from the decay of their perishing leaves and branches, and partly from the growth of *sphagnum* and other marsh-plants. About the middle of the seventeenth century, on Loch Broom, in Ross-shire, over the site of a decayed forest, peat was dug in less than fifty years. In 1756 the whole Wood of Drumlanrig, in Dumfriesshire, was blown down and experienced a similar fate. And other cases are known where, at the bottom of the moss, lie the remains of old forests, with their trees prostrated all in one direction, showing the point from which came the storm that hurled them to the ground.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rennie's *Essays on Peat*, pp. 30, 65.