

Possibly some reader will raise the question, Of what service can all these decaying trees and their coverings of mosses, lichens and fungi be to man? They have their uses, as we shall find if we examine the subject more closely, and notice the effects produced.

The floating germs of vegetable life, the seeds or spores of the lichens and mosses, falling on the surface of the fallen timber, find a soil suited to the peculiar requirements and development of their organisms. These minute vegetable growths are similar to those seen growing upon old rails and stumps and dry walls, and which anyone ignorant of their nature might think part of the substance to which they adhere, instead of living plants as the cryptograms all are. Simple plants, representing the earlier forms of vegetation in the world's history, worthy are they of reverence and adoration. These and others like them might be called the grey fathers of the vegetable kingdom.

As the lichens decay they give place to the mosses, and these, as they increase, send down their wedge-like roots between the fissures of the bark, penetrating into the tissue of the wood, already softened by the decomposition of the former occupants. The dew, the showers, the frosts and snows of winter, falling upon the sponge-like mosses, fill them with moisture, invigorate them and increase them till they form thick mats that hide the surface of the wood.

Some of these mosses, as we have seen, are not mere