

ginning of their labours, which does not go above two centuries and a half back; a time much too short for so plentiful a production as platina, which is found in large quantities in many places.

Besides, when gold is mixed with iron, by fusing them together, we may always, by a chemical process, separate them, and extract the gold: whereas, hitherto, chemists have not been able to make this separation in platina, nor determine the quantity of gold contained in this mineral. This seems to prove, that gold is united with it in a more intimate manner than the common alloy, and that iron is also in it, in a different state from that of common iron. Platina, therefore, appears to me to be the production of nature, and I am greatly inclined to think, that it owes its first origin to the fire of volcanos. Burnt iron, intimately united with gold by sublimation, or fusion, may have produced this mineral, which having been at first formed by the action of the fiercest fire, will afterwards have felt the impression of water, and reiterated frictions, which have given it the form of blunt angles. But water alone might have produced platina; for supposing gold and iron divided as much as possible by the humid mode, their molecules,
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