

The beds of peat are annually augmented by the peculiar mode of increase of the peat-moss, which throws up a succession of shoots to the surface, while the parent plants decay, and form a new layer of the soil.

The peat bogs of Ireland are of great extent : one of the mosses on the banks of the Shannon is two or three miles in breadth, and fifty in length. Mr. Lyell remarks, that the peat-mosses of the North of Europe occupy the areas of the ancient forests of oak and pine ; and that the fall of trees from the effect of storms, or natural decay, by obstructing the draining of a district, and thus giving rise to a marsh, is the origin of most of the peat bogs ; mosses, and other marsh plants, spring up, and soon overwhelm and bury the prostrate forests ; hence the occurrence of trunks and branches of enormous oaks, firs, &c. with their fruits.

De Luc states, that the sites of many of the aboriginal forests on the continent are now covered by mosses and fens, and that many of these changes are attributable to the destruction of the forests by the Romans. A remarkable fact relating to peat bogs must not be omitted ; namely, the occasional occurrence of the bodies of men and animals, in a high state of preservation, at a great depth. In some instances the bodies are converted into a fatty substance, resembling spermaceti, called *adipocire*.

### 36. CONVERSION OF PEAT INTO COAL.\*—A

\* Dr. Jackson on the Geology of Maine.