

of these suppositions, how utterly lost would have appeared to us the deluged arborescence ! But a hand not seen fashioned its repository—stored it up there in impregnable keeping—subjected it to influences all operative for good. And now in these last days the deep and the earth deliver up their trust ; and we enjoy the numberless benefits of well-fed fires, often little considering whence their aliment has been derived.\*

\* Although no fact in geology is better established than the vegetable origin of coal, a complete theory, including an explanation of all the phenomena, is still a desideratum. This arises in part from the circumstance that coal-fields exhibit considerable diversity in the nature of their contents, and the mode in which they are arranged. Some may be accumulations of plants transported by rivers, and ultimately deposited under water, either fresh or marine ; or the perfect preservation of the delicate parts of ferns may exclude the idea of transportation, and lead to the belief that the beds of mineral fuel were slowly accumulated on the spot, from the long-continued influence of vegetation. But we must remember that the accumulation of vegetable matter on dry land, or in shallow water, is scarcely possible but in cold or temperate climates : in the tropics, the process of putrefaction, and the voracity of myriads of insects, will cause the trunk of the stateliest tree to disappear almost as rapidly as the carcase of an elephant.

It does not appear necessary to account for the materials of the coal-beds, by imagining that the atmosphere formerly contained a greater proportion of carbonic acid than it does