

this benefit is the direct result of physical changes which affected the earth at those remote periods of time, when the first forms of vegetable life appeared upon its surface.

The important uses of coal and iron in administering to the supply of our daily wants, give to every individual amongst us, in almost every moment of our lives, a personal concern, of which but few are conscious, in the geological events of these very distant eras. We are all brought into immediate connection with the vegetation that clothed the ancient earth, before one-half of its actual surface had yet been formed. The trees of the primeval forests have not, like modern trees, undergone decay, yielding back their elements to the soil and atmosphere by which they had been nourished; but, treasured up in subterranean storehouses, have been transformed into enduring beds of coal, which in these later ages have become to man the sources of heat, and light, and wealth. My fire now burns with fuel, and my lamp is shining with the light of gas, derived from coal that has been buried for countless ages in the deep and dark recesses of the earth. We prepare our food, and maintain our forges and furnaces, and the power of our steam-engines, with the remains of plants of ancient forms and extinct species, which were swept from the earth ere the formation of the transition strata was completed. Our instru-