

ourselves the question,—What ought to be the inherent properties and the constitution of an elementary principle, which should not only be capable of being formed into the hardest and the softest bodies in nature; but which should also be capable of entering as an essential ingredient into substances so very unlike, as sugar, vinegar, wood, oil, albumen, and many others, in all their countless forms and varieties? Do we not feel all our fancied knowledge annihilated by such a question? Nay, what is more, even when the question is answered for us; and when, with the utmost care, and to the furthest extent of our ability, we have studied all the chemical properties of Carbon—the substance by which the conditions of the question are fulfilled; how totally unable are we to explain these properties, or even to trace them through their simplest modifications? Why, for instance, is the diamond capable of assuming the form of charcoal; or why is charcoal capable of assuming the form of the diamond? And how are these properties modified, and altered, in all the numerous states of combination into which we know carbon enters? On what property or quality, not possessed by other elements, do all those astonishing capabilities of change depend, which are inherent in this element carbon? And why has carbon been chosen for forming organized beings, in preference to siliceous, or iron, or any