

matter, and is in continual motion and variation. All animals and vegetables which have existed from the creation of the world, have successively extracted from this stratum the matter which composes it, and have, after their deaths, restored to it this borrowed matter : it remains there always ready to be retaken, and to serve for the formation of other bodies of the same species successively, for the matter which composes one body is proper and natural to form another body of the same kind. In uninhabited countries, where the woods are never cut, where animals do not brouze on the plants, this stratum of vegetable earth increases considerably. In all woods, even in those which are sometimes cut, there is a bed of mould, of six or eight inches thick, formed entirely by the leaves, small branches, and barks which have perished. I have often observed on the ancient Roman way, which crosses Burgundy in a long extent of soil, that there is formed a bed of black earth more than a foot thick upon the stones, which nourishes very high trees ; and this stratum could be composed only of a black mould formed by the leaves, bark, and perished wood. As vegetables inhale for their nutriment much more
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