

## CHAPTER III.

ON THE NATURE OF FOSSILS, OR ORGANIC REMAINS.

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It is very generally the case, that persons who are not conversant with the nature of organic remains, imagine that all fossils are petrifications; and unless a specimen has the aspect and hardness of stone, they regard it as of modern origin, and devoid of interest. Hence they are surprised to find among the choicest treasures in the cabinet of the geologist, shells and corals as perfect in form, as if recently collected from the sea-shore; bones as little changed, as if they had been interred but for a short period; and teeth possessing their sharp edges and enamel unimpaired. In my early researches I fell into this error, and threw away many beautiful shells that were associated with ammonites, in the marl at Hamsey, supposing, from their perfect state, that they had been accidentally imbedded, and were not genuine fossils. But the state of preservation, and the degree of change which an organic body has undergone in the mineral kingdom, have no necessary relation to its antiquity. The shells in some of the ancient secondary strata are frequently as