

COAL.  

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Although at the present time, no one at all conversant with geological science doubts the vegetable origin of coal, the period is not distant, when many eminent geologists were sceptical on this point; and the truth in this, as in most other questions of natural philosophy, was established with difficulty. The experiments and observations of the late Dr. M'Culloch, mainly contributed to solve the problem as to the vegetable nature of this substance; and that eminent chemist and geologist, successfully traced the transition of vegetable matter from peat-wood, brown coal, lignite, and jet, to coal, anthracite, graphite, and plumbago (*Wond.* p. 639.). Nor must the meritorious labours of that accomplished naturalist, and excellent man, the late author of the "Organic Remains of a Former World," in this field of research be forgotten. The first volume of that work, which treats on vegetable fossils, contains much original and valuable information on the transmutation of vegetable matter, by bituminous fermentation, into the various mineral substances in which its original nature and structure are altogether changed and obliterated; it may be consulted by the student with advantage.

Although the vegetable origin of all coal will not admit of question, yet evidence of the original structure is not always attainable. The most perfect