

this useful mineral: but there is one circumstance in their history so evidently calculated to facilitate the labour of man in obtaining this substance, and to extend its supply, and so remarkably though not exclusively characteristic of those particular formations, that, though not obvious to a general observer, it cannot fail to arrest the attention of those to whom it is pointed out. A coal field may be represented, in a popular description, as consisting of a succession of alternating strata of coal and sand-stone, &c.: which, having been originally deposited in a basin-shaped cavity, in such a manner as to be at the same time parallel to the concave surface of the basin and to each other, have been subsequently broken up by some force that has thrown the planes of the ruptured masses into various directions. Now, had the strata remained undisturbed, a very considerable proportion of the coal which is now quarried would most probably never have been obtained by human industry: for, the strata dipping down from the circumference towards the centre of the basin, that perpendicular depth, beyond which it is practically impossible to work the coal, would soon have been reached in the operation of mining. But, in consequence of the rupture and consequent dislocation of the strata, many of those portions which were originally deposited at such a depth beneath the surface as would