

mosses, by their successive growth and decay, form the combustible substratum of those extensive and at present uncultivated tracts in Ireland, which, till they shall have happily been reclaimed by the industry of a yet barbarous population, contribute by the turf and peat which they afford, to the comfort of myriads of individuals; who, were it not for this source of supply, would be, in their present state, in total want of one of the principal necessaries of life.

In many populous districts of this island, the aboriginal forests, which formerly so amply supplied the surrounding inhabitants, have long since been cleared from the surface of the earth: and their site is now occupied by cultivated lands and a condensed population. The former source of fuel has consequently in such parts long since failed: but the clearing of the surface has in many places detected that invaluable mineral combustible, which, usually bearing in itself indubitable marks of a vegetable origin, from the traces of organization still apparent in almost every part of its substance, was deposited ages before it was wanted, as a future substitute for the fuel which in the meantime has been derived from the actually existing vegetable kingdom.

It is not intended here to enter into the general consideration of those geological formations called *coal fields*, which are the repositories of