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OF AIR, WATER, AND EARTH.

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BY our former observations it appears that air is the necessary and first food of fire, which can neither subsist nor propagate but by what it assimilates, consumes, or carries off, of that element, whereas of all material substances, air is that which seems to exist the most independently of the aid or presence of fire; for although it habitually has nearly the same heat as other matters on the surface of the earth, it can do without it and requires infinitely less than any of the rest to support its fluidity, since the most excessive cold cannot deprive it of that. The strongest condensations are not capable of breaking its spring; the active fire, in combustible matters, is the only agent which can alter its nature by rarefying and extending its spring to the point of rendering it ineffectual, and thus destroying its elasticity. In this state, and in all the links which precede, the air is capable of re-assuming its elasticity, in proportion as the vapours of combustible matters evaporate and separate from it. But if the spring have been totally weakened