

is, to effect that in one day, which nature takes an age to perform. However vain this pretension may appear, we must not entirely renounce it, for has not man discovered the mode of creating fire, of applying it to his use, and by the means of this element to suddenly dissolve those bodies by fusion which would require a considerable period by any other means?

We must not, however, conclude that Nature really performs by the means of water all that we do by fire. The decomposition of every substance is only to be made by division, and the greater this division the more the decomposition will be complete. Fire seems to divide as much as possible those matters which it fuses; nevertheless it may be doubted whether those which water and acids keep in dissolution are not still more divided, and the vapours raised by heat contain matters still further attenuated, in the bowels of the earth, then, by the means of the heat it includes, and the water which insinuates, there is made an infinity of sublimations; distillations, crystallizations, aggregations, and disjunctions, of every kind. By time all substances may be compounded and decomposed by these means; water may divide and attenuate the parts more than fire when it melts them, and those