

or geometrically closed boundary, is to pass matter in or out through the walls.

This law has been called the sheet-anchor of chemistry, but it is very far from being self-evident ; and its statement involves the finding of a property of matter which experimentally shall remain unchanged, although nearly every other property is modified. To superficial observation nothing is easier than to destroy matter. When liquid—when dew, for instance—evaporates, it seems to disappear, and when a manuscript is burnt it is certainly destroyed ; but it turns out that there is something which may be called the vapour of water, or the “matter” of the letter, which still persists, though it has taken rarer form and become unrecognisable. Ultimately, in order to express the persistence of the permanent abstraction called “matter” clearly, it is necessary to speak of the “ultimate atoms” of which it is composed, and to say that though these may enter into various combinations, and thereby display many out-