

of the diamond, that it contained an inflammable principle; which opinion was subsequently confirmed by direct experiment. It will be remembered by the chemical reader that on the same ground he made the same conjecture with respect to water, and with the same success. And never, perhaps, did the eye of philosophy penetrate more unexpectedly the thick veil which is so often found to hide the real character of various forms of matter: for, imperishable as from its name the *adamant* was supposed to be, who would have antecedently expected that it might be dissipated into air by the process of combustion? and, with respect to the other subject of his conjecture, if any principle was opposed to combustibility in the opinion of mankind it was water—"Aquæ contrarius ignis."

SECT. IV.

The Distribution and relative Proportions of Sea and Land; and the geological Arrangement and physical Character of some of the superficial Strata of the Earth.

As it is clearly a just object of the present treatise to select the most familiar and most obvious instances of the principle intended to be illustrated, I shall in entering upon the abstruse department of geology, consider only those phenomena which offer themselves to the eye in every part of the world; and which are either at once intelligible, or easily demonstrable, to the commonest observer.