

This seems to indicate that the most essential difference between combustible matters and those which are not so, consists in the latter containing only a few or none of the light, ethereal, and oily matters susceptible of an expansive motion, or, at least, if they contain them, that they are fixed, so that they cannot exercise their volatility whenever the force of the fire is not strong enough to surmount the force of adhesion which retains them united to the fixed parts of matter. It may be said that this induction is confirmed by a number of observations well known to chemists; but what appears to be less so, and which, nevertheless, is a necessary consequence of it, is, that all matter may become volatile when the expansive force of the fire can be rendered superior to the attractive force which holds the parts of matter united; for though to produce a fire sufficiently strong it may require better constructed mirrors than any at present known, yet we are certain that fixity is only a relative quality, and that there is no matter absolutely so, since heat dilates the most fixed bodies. Now is not this dilation the index of a beginning separation, that may be augmented with a degree of heat to fusion, and with a still greater heat to volatilisation?