

the formation of springs and rivers would be as effectually prevented by rain ceasing to fall from the atmosphere, as if the material of the rain itself did not exist in it.

Of the modes in which nature disposes of the rain that has fallen on the earth, and of the formation of natural springs and rivers, more particular notice will be taken hereafter: but it may be observed by the way, that, although there is scarcely any substance which water is not capable of dissolving to a certain extent, and consequently no natural form of water is pure, yet in almost every instance the natural forms of water are not only innocuous, but salutary.

SECT. VIII.

The Air of the Atmosphere, as connected with Respiration.

If we suppose the atmosphere deprived of heat, and light, and moisture, and of all those other heterogeneous particles which are either naturally or accidentally contained in it; there still remains the medium which is the receptacle or vehicle of those various substances: and this medium is indeed that, which in common apprehension is understood to be the atmosphere itself.

Of the vital importance of atmospherical air no formal proof can be required; for every one capable of the least reflection must know that its presence is almost constantly necessary to the