

Among the metals there is one, the history of which ought not to be overlooked on the present occasion, from the very circumstance that its value in a great measure depends on the absence of most of those properties which render all other metals valuable. Quicksilver is the metal in question: and what an anomaly does it not present in the general history of metals; existing, under all common variations of temperature, in a fluid state, while all other metals, with which we are familiar, are, under the same variations, solid; nor indeed are they capable of becoming fluid, but by an elevation of temperature to which they are hardly liable to be exposed, unless designedly: lastly, in consequence of its fluidity, destitute of malleability and ductility; which are among the most valuable properties of the metals taken collectively? This state of fluidity, however, is the very point on which the value of this metal in a great measure turns: for hence it is successfully employed for many purposes, to which, were it solid, it would be inapplicable. How valuable is its use in the construction of the common thermometer and barometer; the value, in the case of the former instrument, depending entirely on its fluidity, and on the physical characters of the fluid itself—the equable ratio, for instance, of its contraction and expansion under widely varying degrees of temperature; and its property