

tains that these atoms existed from eternity, and are in their essence indestructible.

He asserts as untenable, in fair reasoning, the opinion that there is no term to the divisibility of matter ; since, on that supposition, the smallest bodies would consist of an infinite number of parts : and he consequently concludes that those indivisible bodies or atoms must be perfectly solid^d. He impugns, as opposed to common sense, the doctrine of Heraclitus that all things are formed from fire^e, and also the doctrine of others, that all things are formed from fire or air, or water or earth^f ; or from binary combinations of them, as of air and fire, or of earth and water : and, lastly, he rejects also the doctrine of Empedocles, that all natural substances are produced from the joint union of fire, earth, air, and water^g. And Lucretius himself supposes that the original atoms of matter may, by a mere variation in the modes of combination, produce all the objects of nature, whether animate or inanimate ; illustrating his argument ingeniously by a reference to the fact, that an endless variety of words, of the most different meaning and sound, is produced by various combinations of the same letters^h.

It is not necessary, on the present occasion, to comment on the obviously atheistical charac-

^d Lucret. lib. I. passim. ^e Lib. I. 636—639, and 691—700.

^f Lib. I. 706—712. ^g Lib. I. 713—717. ^h Lib. I. 817—829.