

CHAPTER XVI.

Light.

BESIDES the hearing and sound there is another mode by which we become sensible of the impressions of external objects, namely, sight and light. This subject also offers some observations bearing on our present purpose.

It has been declared by writers on Natural Theology, that the human eye exhibits such evidence of design and skill in its construction, that no one, who considers it attentively, can resist this impression: nor does this appear to be saying too much. It must, at the same time, be obvious that this construction of the eye could not answer its purposes, except the constitution of light corresponded to it. Light is an element of the most peculiar kind and properties, and such an element can hardly be conceived to have been placed in the universe without a regard to its operation and functions. As the eye is made for light, so light must have been made, at least among other ends, for the eye.

1. We must expect to comprehend imperfectly only the mechanism of the elements. Still, we have endeavoured to show that in some instances the arrangements by which their purposes are effected are, to a certain extent, intelligible. In order to explain, however, in what manner light answers those ends which appear to us its principal ones, we must know something of the nature of light. There have, hitherto, been, among men of science, two prevailing opinions upon this subject: some considering light as consisting in the emission of luminous particles; others accounting for its phenomena by the propagation of vibrations through a highly subtle and elastic