

now to show, that all this vast assemblage of molecules, so numerous, so diversified, so extraordinary as they are, may be reduced to a very few elementary groups ; upon the endless combinations and separations of which, all the phenomena of chemistry depend.

SECTION I.

Of Chemical Elementary Principles.

THE substances at present considered as elementary, amount to about fifty-four. Of these, several possess certain properties in common ; though they all differ from one another in subordinate particulars ; or in other words, are specifically different. Of the whole number, not above two or three exist, in any great quantity, in an uncombined state, at least in those parts of our globe to which we have access ; but the whole are wrapped up, as it were, and have their properties concealed, in compounds. Under ordinary circumstances, most elementary principles exist as solids ; but some of the more important occur in a gaseous form ; and one or two as fluids. A few of them are *apparently* of so little consequence in the world, that if they were annihilated, they would scarcely be missed ;