

mon ; though in other respects, and particularly, in their apparent relative importance in the economy of nature, they differ exceedingly. They are remarkable for the tendency they have, not only to combine with one another ; but with almost all the bodies below them in the table ; and their union, particularly that of oxygen, is usually accompanied by the extrication of more or less, of heat and light ; and constitutes the well-known phenomenon, termed *combustion*.

(1) *Oxygen*, is one of the very few elementary substances, occurring naturally in the gaseous form ; in which form it is found in common air, in the proportion of about a fifth part. As the world at present exists, oxygen, perhaps, may be fairly considered as one of the most important, if not the most important, substance in it. From its proneness to enter into composition, it is constantly operating upon, and modifying, every thing. By far the greater proportion of mineral bodies, forming the crust of the earth, contain more or less of oxygen ; and in all plants, and animals, it actually exists, as a constituent elementary principle. In short, the properties of oxygen, stamp it as an element and subordinate agent, of the most important kind ; while the numberless contrivances which are observable in nature, to secure, or evade, or modify its operations, are truly extraordinary ; and exhibit some of the most unequivocal evidences of design, on the