

CHAPTER I.

IDENTITY.

The word "identity" denotes the sameness or unaltered state of a thing, under different circumstances and relations. When a living person becomes drowned, and a dead body is afterwards found in the water, the proof that the body so found is the same as of the person who was known to have been alive, is said to be the proof of its identity. Or, the identity may be of whole species; as, in gathering apples from the trees in an orchard, the pippins, russets, snows and crabs, may be mixed in one heap, and each species be afterwards identified, as having been taken from trees of that species. The identity of the elements or ultimate constituent parts of organized bodies, under various circumstances, forms the starting point of the chemico-medicinal system of practice. It assumes that each element which forms part of the food of a plant or animal, preserves the same size, the same shape, and the same chemical affinities, in every situation in which it may be placed. For example, a particle of carbon is of the same size and form, whether existing in carbonic acid, in alcohol, in the fat of the body, or in the diamond; consequently, the elements of the food preserve their elementary characteristics in the stomach, blood, tissues, excretions, and, finally, in the soil or air. On this view is founded the objection to all substances as medicaments, whose constituent elements are different from those of the food; as well as of all substances, as food, whose constituents are different from those of the body. Seeing the important bearing which this principle of the identity of the elements exercises, on both hygiene and medicine, it therefore claims a minute and careful exposition.

To the contrary and prevalent belief, that the elements of the food become changed in the body, by the vital force, is to be imputed the erroneous views which have been entertained, with respect to the use of the deleterious and poisonous preparations of the pharmacopœia. The nature of the changes which have, thus, been supposed