

VIII.

ROCK-WEATHERING MEASURED BY THE
DECAY OF TOMBSTONES.¹

A BUILDING or other object having an antique aspect is called "age-worn" or "time-eaten," or is described by some other phrase which implies that during a long course of years the object in question had been suffering from some slow kind of change. We speak of "the gnawing tooth of time," as if time were a material form, or at least a force or energy endowed with certain powers of destructiveness, though obviously mere lapse of time can have no such influence. That there is some close connection, however, between antiquity and decay is manifest on every side. An ancient building is expected to look more or less decayed: if we find it to look fresh, we immediately, and as it were instinctively, doubt its antiquity.

The change which in course of time results in producing the crumbling, venerable aspect of a piece of old human architecture is but part of the continual change in progress upon natural surfaces of rock all over the world. The cliffs of a mountain-side or sea-shore reveal precisely the same alteration, but in a higher degree, for they rise on a more stupendous scale and have been exposed to the

¹ *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 1880.