

the removal of these useless or noxious materials, by transferring them to the general mass of circulating blood, so as either to be again usefully employed, or altogether discarded by excretion from the system. This object is accomplished by a peculiar set of vessels; and the function they perform is termed *Absorption*.

Lastly, the conversion of the fluid nutriment into the solids of the body, and its immediate application to the purposes of the development of the organs, of their preservation in the state of health and activity, and of the repair of such injuries as they may chance to sustain, as far as the powers of the system are adequate to such reparation, are the objects of a seventh set of functions, more especially comprised under the title of *Nutrition*, which closes this long series of chemical changes, and this intricate but harmonious system of operations:

Although the order in which the constituent elements of organized products are arranged, and the mode in which they are combined, are entirely unknown to us, we can nevertheless perceive that in following them successively from the simplest vegetables to the higher orders of the animal kingdom, they acquire continually increasing degrees of complexity, corresponding, in some measure, to the greater refinement and complication of the structures by which they have been elaborated, and of the bodies to which they are ultimately assimilated. Thus, plants derive their nourishment from the crude and simple materials which they absorb from the earth, the waters, and the air that surround them; materials which consist almost wholly of water, with a small proportion of carbonic acid, and a few saline ingredients, of which that water is the vehicle. But these, after having been converted by the powers of vegetable assimilation, into the substance of the plant, acquire the characteristic properties of organized products, though they are still the simplest of that class. In this state, and when the fabric they had composed is destroyed, and they are scattered over the soil, they are fitted to become more highly nutri-