

and a diminution of energy becomes apparent in every function.

Such are the insensible gradations by which, while gliding down the stream of time, we lapse into old age, which insidiously steals on us before we are aware of its approach. But the same provident power which presided at our birth, which superintended the growth of all the organs, which infused animation into each as they arose, and which conducted the system unimpaired to its maturity, is still exerted in adjusting the conditions under which it is placed in its season of decline. New arrangements are made, new energies are called forth, and new resources are employed, to accommodate it to its altered circumstances, to prop the tottering fabric, and retard the progress of its decay. In proportion as the supply of nutritive materials has become less abundant, a more strict economy is practised with regard to their disposal; the substance of the body is husbanded with greater care; the absorbent vessels are employed to remove such parts as are no longer useful; and when all these adjustments have been made, the functions still go on for a considerable length of time without material alteration.

The period prescribed for its duration being at length completed, and the ends of its existence accomplished, the fabric can no longer be sustained, and preparation must be made for its inevitable fall. In order to form a correct judgment of the real intentions of nature, with regard to this last stage of life, its phenomena must be observed in cases where the system has been wholly intrusted to the operation of her laws. When death is the simple consequence of age, we find that the extinction of the powers of life observes an order the reverse of that which was followed in their evolution. The sensorial functions, which were the last perfected, are the first which decay: and their decline is found to commence with those mental faculties more immediately dependent on the physical conditions of the sensorium, and more especially with the memory, which