

CHAPTER III.

OF THE DIGESTIVE PROCESS ; AND OF THE GENERAL
ACTION OF THE STOMACH AND DUODENUM.

WE proceed now to consider the most important function of the stomach, by which the assimilation of the food is begun. But before that function can be well understood, it is necessary to make a few remarks on the influence of water, in modifying the intimate constitution and the peculiar properties of alimentary substances. We have intentionally delayed these remarks, in order that in this place the chemical influence of water might be more strikingly exemplified.

Water enters into the composition of most organized bodies in two separate forms ; which must be clearly distinguished, and which it is requisite that the reader should always bear in mind. Water may constitute an *essential* element of a substance, as of sugar or of starch in their dryest states ; in which case, the water cannot be disunited without destroying the compound : or water may constitute an *accidental* ingredient of a substance, as of sugar or of starch in their moist states ; in which case more or less