

frame, we shall now proceed to consider those of its decay.

At first the bones of the foetus are only small threads, of a ductile matter, and of little more substance than the flesh; by degrees they acquire solidity, and may be considered as a kind of small tubes, lined both within and without by a thin membrane which supplies the osseous matter. A pretty exact idea might be formed of the growth of bones, by comparing them with the manner in which the wood and solid parts of vegetables are produced. These bones, or, as we have said, tubes, are covered at both ends by a soft substance, and in proportion as they receive nutritious juices, the extremities extend from the middle point which always preserves its original station. The ossification begins at the middle and gradually follows the extension until the whole is converted into bone. Having acquired their full growth, and the nutritious juices no longer being necessary for their augmentation, they serve the purpose of increasing their solidity; in time the bones become so solid as not to admit the circulation of these juices which are highly essential to their nourishment; and this being stopped, they undergo a change like that perceived in old trees;

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