

and this change is the first cause that renders the decay of the human body inevitable.

The cartilages, which may be considered as soft and imperfect bones, grow also more rigid as we increase in years ; and as they are generally placed near the joints, the motion of these must of consequence become more difficult. Thus, in old age, every action of the body is performed with labour ; and the cartilages, which in youth were elastic, and in manhood pliant, will now sooner break than bend, and may be considered as the second cause of our dissolution.

The membranes become likewise as we grow old more dense and more dry. Those, for example, which surround the bones cease to be ductile, and are incapable of extension so early as the age of 18 or 20. It is also the same with the muscular fibres, and though to the external touch the body seems, as we advance in years, to grow more soft, yet in reality it is increasing in hardness. On such occasions it is the skin, and not the flesh, that communicates this perception. The fat which increases when the body is arrived at maturity, being interspersed between the skin and muscles, gives an appearance of softness which the flesh
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