

continued privation of it is, perhaps, of all modes of death the most dreadful. This we learn from the occasional accounts of individuals who have escaped from shipwrecks, in which their companions had perished amidst the agonies of thirst. And it is said of those unhappy victims of a barbarous punishment, in Persia, (who being immured in masonry as to every part of their body but the head, are left to perish in that state,) that they terminate their last hours, perhaps days, in incessant cries for water.

The necessity of this element for our support may be antecedently inferred, on philosophical principles, from an examination of the physical composition of any animal body; of which, in by far the greater number of instances, more than three-fourths of the whole weight are due to the presence of water. This water of composition may be easily separated by the application of a moderate degree of heat, or even by spontaneous evaporation at a common temperature, without any further decomposition of the body; the muscles and skin consequently shrinking to such an extent, as to give the whole frame the appearance of a skeleton, enveloped, as it were, in parchment. Such a result is occasionally observable in human bodies which have been deposited in dry cemeteries; and is by no means uncommon in the case of small animals, as rats, for instance, which having been acci-