

OF THE MUSCULAR AND ELASTIC FORCES.

The muscular power is contrasted with the elastic, as possessing a living property of motion. We acquiesce in the distinction, since the muscular fibre ceases to have irritability or power in death, while elasticity continues in the dead part. But yet there is a property in the elasticity of the living body which cannot be retained after death. To illustrate this, we shall take the instance of the elasticity in the catgut string of a harp. Suppose that the string is screwed tight, so as to vibrate in a given time, and to sound the note correctly; if that string be struck rudely, it is put out of tune; that is, it is stretched and somewhat relaxed, and no longer vibrates in time. This does not take place in the living fibre; for here there is a property of restoration. If we see the tuner screwing up the harp string, and with difficulty, and after repeated attempts, bringing it to its due tension,—trying it with the tuning fork, and with his utmost acquired skill restoring it to its former elasticity, we have a demonstration of how much life is performing in the fibres of the animal frame, after every effort or exertion; and the more powerful the mechanical parts of the