

its surface only. We have seen that the elements forming the structure of organized beings, are not only combined in different proportions; but that in many instances, these elements appear to undergo further decomposition into ultimate forms of matter; which, out of a living body do not, and perhaps, in the present constitution of the universe, cannot, exist in an isolated state. Owing to this diversity in the composition of organized beings from the composition of inorganic matter; and to other causes which will readily occur to the reader, organized beings and their laws, are in continual opposition to the general laws, by which inorganic matter is governed. To counteract, therefore, these opposite laws, and to maintain the existence of organized beings, demands the unremitting efforts of the organic agency. But at length these efforts are exhausted; the contest ceases: when the general laws of inorganic nature prevail; and speedily reduce, to their original state of existence, the atoms which had been incarcerated in the living frame.

The spontaneous decay of organized beings is usually termed the *putrefactive* process; and some substances have much more tendency than others, to undergo putrefaction. As might be expected; substances whose constitution is most simple, as the oils, and bodies of a like nature, are also the most permanent; while substances