

vances to the infirmities of old age, because in both cases, the bones, the cartilages, and all the fibres, require a longer time to arrive at that degree of solidity, which must be the foundation of their destruction. This natural cause of death is common to all animals, and even to vegetables. An oak only perishes because its more ancient parts, which are in the centre, become so hard and so compact, that they can no longer receive any nourishment; and the moisture they contain, being deprived of circulation, becomes corrupted, and gradually alters the fibres of the wood, which become red, and at length crumble into dust.

The duration of life may be determined, in some measure, by the time that was employed in the attainment of maturity. A tree, or an animal, which takes but a short time to finish its growth, perishes much sooner than those which are longer in coming to maturity. Neither animals nor plants begin to spread in bulk till they have acquired their summit of height. Man grows in stature till the age of 17 or 18; but his body is not completely unfolded in all its parts till that of 30; while a dog is at its full length in one year, and at its

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