

whole system: and, when once stopped, their renewal is impossible. Nature has thus assigned to every living being a certain period as the utmost extent of its duration. Even when exempt from external interference, all are doomed to perish, sooner or later, by the slow but unerring operation of the same internal causes which originally effected their development and growth, and which are inseparably interwoven with the conditions of their existence.

Numerous, however, are the extraneous and accidental causes that may hasten or precipitate their destruction, long before the period of natural decay. How striking is the contrast, on those occasions, between the scene we have just beheld of an animal in the full vigour of its powers, either rapidly bounding across the plain, or gliding beneath the wave, or soaring in the elevated regions of air, and the spectacle of the same animal lying, the next moment, extended at our feet, bereft at once of activity and of sense—of all the faculties and powers that constitute life. Can we contemplate without amazement so complete and instantaneous a change; so sudden and awful a catastrophe? Must we not be animated by an eager desire to penetrate so great a mystery, and resolve the many questions which so striking a phenomenon must naturally suggest? What, we are led to ask, is the nature of this extraordinary revolution, extending over the whole of that frame which had so long delighted the eye by its beauty, and producing this sudden and irretrievable extinction of the powers of life? How comes it that all those mighty energies which the animal had so lately displayed, and which had called forth our admiration, perhaps even excited our envy, are at once and for ever annihilated? What was the bond, thus suddenly dissevered, which held together the various parts of that compound frame? What potent spell has been dissolved, which could retain in combination for so long a period the multifarious elements of that exquisite organization; and from the control of which being now released, these elements hasten to resume their wonted attractions, and entering into new