

**A BRIEF TREATISE ON  
DEATH, PHILOSOPHICALLY,  
MORALLY, AND  
PRACTICALLY, CONSIDERED**

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A Brief Treatise on Death, Philosophically, Morally, and Practically, Considered by Robert Fellowes

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*By Robert Fellowses, A.M. Oxon.*

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1805.

**Inscription.**

To the Memory of  
The Lady HARRIET FITZROY,  
who,  
To a meek and quiet spirit,  
added  
All the tasteful and elegant accomplishments,  
Which refine and embellish  
The female character ;—  
who,  
In a long course of sickness and of suffering,  
Exhibited a pattern of the most  
Submissive resignation ;—  
who,  
Practised all the softer virtues  
In her life,  
And who discovered the animating hope  
Of Immortality  
In her death ;—  
These pages are inscribed,  
By the Author.

## DEATH,

*Philosophically, Theologically,  
and Practically, considered.*

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### PART I.

NO truth is more often pronounced or more generally acknowledged than this, that "life is short."—It is a truth, which is inculcated by every day's experience; and which, notwithstanding all our thoughtlessness, the vicissitudes of life will not suffer us to forget.

The frame of man is made of perishable materials. It is a subtle and delicate piece of mechanism, admirably contrived; but which, like other me-

chanical contrivances, wears with use, and must finally be destroyed by time. The animal fibre, while it is in a state of life, is in perpetual activity; the motions of the heart and arteries are never still; and the moment they stop, there is an end to the life of the individual; and though the human frame contains a power of resistance to its own dissolution, yet, it must be remembered, that the principle of vitality is not only a supporting, but a destroying principle. It finally consumes the very body which it preserves.

Many are the remedies, which, under diverse names and forms, have been invented for the prolongation of life, and for giving, if I may so speak, a sort of temporal eternity to man. But these preparations, instead of being conducive to the end for which they were designed,



have usually been found calculated only to shorten the period of existence by the destructive ingredients of which they were composed. Those ingredients have tended to stimulate the system into an unnatural excess of action, which has caused a more rapid expenditure ; a premature consumption of the powers of life. Any mixture, of whatever nature it may be, which increases the strength, or incites the activity of the vital powers to a degree beyond what is natural, or what the human frame, in a healthy state, requires ; or, on the other hand, which reduces the strength and activity of the vital principle, below that which is agreeable to nature and necessary for health, must equally induce debility and accelerate decay : and perpetually to keep the system in that degree of strength, that ca-

capacity of action and of sensibility to stimuli which is most in unison with the fixed laws of nature and of health, seems impossible, unless we could previously secure the corporeal fibre against that tendency to dissolution and decay, which is inherent in all organized matter ; and which, after a certain period, though sooner or later in some individuals than in others, inevitably manifests its force in the destruction of man, the sovereign of the world, as well as in that of all the species of the vegetable or animal tribes ; of the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air ; of the trees of the forest and the flowers of the field. These have all their stated periods of beauty and deformity, of youth and age, of life and death. They come up and are cut down ; they are vigorous and alert, then motionless and cold ; they are sensitive, and soon cease to feel ;

they are; and how soon does all that can be said of them, amount to this, that *they have been!!!*

To give any thing like perpetuity to the life of man, seems impossible, unless we could infuse into the frame a durable principle of resistance to the consuming force of the never-ceasing internal and external stimuli, and slow but certain agency of time, while we remove from it that principle of destructibility which it brings into the world. But though man can, in particular cases, by wise and prudent management, by a well-tempered diligence and caution, give a salutary direction to, or prevent the noxious effects of, the laws of nature, yet he can, in no instance, totally subvert any one of those laws; or change that close and indissoluble connexion of cause and effect, which