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CHAPTER III.

MOLLUSCA.

§ 1. Mollusca in general.

THE series of animal structures, arranged according to their mechanical functions, conducts us next to the Mollusca; an assemblage of beings which was first recognised as constituting one of the primary divisions of the animal kingdom by Cuvier, the greatest naturalist of modern times. A vast multitude of species, possessing in common many remarkable physiological characters, are comprehended in this extensive class. In all, as their name imports, the body is of soft consistence; and it is enclosed more or less completely in a muscular envelope, called the mantle, composed of a layer of contractile fibres, which are interwoven with the soft and elastic integument. Openings are left in this mantle for the admission of the external fluid to the mouth and to the respiratory organs, and also for the occasional protrusion of the head and the foot, when these organs exist. But a large proportion of the animals of this class are acephalous, that is, destitute of a head, and the mantle is then occasionally elongated to form tubes, often of considerable length, for the purpose of conducting water into the interior of the body.

Mollusca, with the exception of a few among the higher orders, are but imperfectly furnished with organs of locomotion. The greater number, indeed, are formed for an existence as completely stationary as the Zoophytes attached to a fixed base. The Oyster, the Muscle, and the Limpet, for example, are usually adherent to rocks at the bottom of the sea, and are consequently dependent for their nourishment