

motion; and they very probably assist in respiration, which appears evidently connected with the alternate contraction and expansion of these animals. They are also so constructed as to lay hold of every substance that floats within their reach, whether by means of some gummy excretion like bird-lime, as some suppose, or whether they are furnished with very minute suckers by which they can adhere to any substance, has not been ascertained.* Trembley observed, that when the common polype of fresh water touched any little animal with one of its long tentacular arms, it was immediately arrested, and in spite of the most violent efforts to liberate itself, which he compares to those of a fish that had been hooked, was held fast, and carried to the mouth of the polype and swallowed.

The body of polypes is formed of a kind of inspissated mucus, with confusedly agglomerated, and probably nervous, molecules equally distributed; it is covered by no skin, is extremely contractile, and forms an alimentary sac open at one end, serving both for mouth and anal passage. The equal distribution of nervous molecules through the whole substance of these animals, will account for their extreme tenacity of life. In fact, this uniform gelatinous mass, which is without any organized structure, may be regarded as a kind of primary substance, which possesses characters, in some respects, common to both animal and vegetable matter.

This substance without any nervous centre—though nervous influence, one would think, must be in most force round the orifice where the tentacles are in action,—yet

* The power possessed by the Hydra of seizing passing animals, and retaining them by means of its tentacula, is evidently voluntary; according to the observations of Corda upon the anatomy of *Hydra fusca*, it depends upon the protrusion of numerous minute recurved hooklets, which in their form almost remind the observer of the poison fangs of some venomous serpent, and, in like manner, are supposed to be armed with poison.—T. R. J.