

The earliest accounts extant, relating to Acalephs, are contained in a few passages of the *History of Animals* by Aristotle; but these are very meagre, and show that the great Greek philosopher had no very clear idea either of their affinities or of their structure.<sup>1</sup> He speaks of them under three names; calling them, in some of his passages, Acalephæ, in others, Knidæ, and in another, Pneumones. A careful comparison of all the passages in which these animals are mentioned, shows that the names of Acalephæ and Knidæ were probably applied to Actiniæ and to Medusæ indiscriminately, and that Aristotle himself did not distinguish these animals accurately, or, at least, did not know in what their essential differences consist, for, speaking of Acalephæ as well as of Knidæ, he only says that there are two kinds, one of which is attached to the rocks, while the other may free itself and seek its food by night; which seems to indicate that he believed the free Medusæ to be at times attached like the Actiniæ, and capable of freeing themselves at will, or that the Actiniæ, freeing themselves, become Medusæ.<sup>2</sup> Taking into consideration, however,

<sup>1</sup> The best edition of the Zoölogical works of Aristotle is that of IO. GOTTLÖB SCHNEIDER; *Aristotelis de Animalibus Historiæ*, Lib. X., Græce and Latine, Lipsiæ, 1811, 4 vols. 8vo. The best translation is that of DR. FR. STRACK into German: *Aristoteles Naturgeschichte der Thiere übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen begleitet*, Frankfurt am Main, 1816, 1 vol. 8vo. The French translation by Cuvier, Paris, 1783, 2 vols. 4to., is less accurate. There is no good English translation.

<sup>2</sup> As the account which LESSON gives of the views of Aristotle relating to Medusæ, in his *Histoire Naturelle des Zoöphytes: Acalèphes*, Paris, 1843, is far from accurate, I deem it necessary to introduce here a literal translation of all the passages of the original text relating to that subject.

The name *Acalephe* appears in six different passages in Aristotle. First, in Book I. Chap. I. Sec. 6, when, speaking of the habits and functions of animals, he says, that "there are some which get their food in the water, and are unable to live out of it; they do not, however, take in either air or water, as the Acalephe and the Ostræa." Next, in Sec. 8, speaking of the ability of animals to change their place, he says, "some both attach and detach themselves, as a genus of the so-called Acalephæ, for some of these, detaching themselves by night, go

about to feed." In Book IV. Chap. VI. Sec. 4 and 5, when speaking of the structure of the marine animals, he mentions that "there is also the genus of the Acalephæ, which is peculiar; they cling to the rocks, like some of the shell fishes, but occasionally free themselves. They have no shell, but their whole body is fleshy, and they feel, and seize the hand approaching them, and then hold it, as the Polypus" (which is the Octopus of modern systematic writers) "does with its feelers, in such a manner as to cause the flesh to swell. They have the mouth in the middle, and live from the rocks as from a shell" (which probably means that the rocks afford them the same protection as the shell gives to the oyster). "If any one of the small fishes falls in their way, they hold to it, as to the hand; so also if any thing eatable falls in their way, they devour it, and one genus frees itself and feeds upon scallops and sea-urchins, whenever any thing falls in its way. They seem to have no visible excrements, but in this they resemble the plants. There are two genera of Acalephæ, one of which is smaller and more eatable, the other large and hard, like those found about Chalcis. During the winter their flesh is firm, wherefore they are caught, and are eatable; during summer they perish, for they become soft, and, if touched, are easily torn, and cannot be taken off at