

CHAPTER THIRD.

NORTH AMERICAN CTENOPHORÆ.

SECTION I.

THE GENUS PLEUROBRACHIA AND ITS SPECIES.

ALL our knowledge of the animal kingdom being derived from a study of individuals, and our insight into their various relations growing out of the fullest comparisons between them, it is natural, that, in describing animals, we should at times dwell more extensively upon the results of such comparisons, and at other times turn our attention more especially to the conditions under which they live. Investigations neglecting either the one or the other side of the subject must, from the nature of things, remain imperfect. It is only when the study of the structure and functions of an animal draws to a close, and we have made ourselves perfectly familiar with its mode of life, that we may begin a systematic survey of its various connections, and ascertain its position in the system, as determined by its anatomical peculiarities, its embryonic growth, the period of its appearance upon our globe, and its geographical distribution upon its surface. But science cannot take for granted mere results, presented in a dogmatic form: it requires the fullest evidence of every statement and the fullest demonstration of every inference. Special descriptions must therefore be full and minute: they must, moreover, be comparative, and even embrace the widest range of comparisons, that no doubts may remain in the mind of the reader respecting the correctness of the information offered him. I have on that account thought it desirable to reproduce here such parts of the descriptions of the North American Ctenophoræ published in the Memoirs of the American Academy for 1849 as may throw additional light upon the subjects discussed in the preceding chapters. I begin with our Pleurobrachia, a small, rounded, transparent body with two long threads