

CHAPTER THIRD.

THE GENUS CYANEA AND ALLIED GENERA.

SECTION I.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF CYANEA ARCTICA.

I HAVE never felt more deeply the imperfection of our knowledge of some of the most remarkable types of the animal kingdom, than in attempting to describe the beautiful representative of the genus *Cyanea* found along the Atlantic coast of North America. I can truly say that I have fully shared the surprise of casual observers, in noticing this gigantic Radiate stranded upon our beaches, and wondered what may be the meaning of all the different parts hanging from the lower surface of the large gelatinous disk. It is true that naturalists have long ago given particular names to all of them,—they have distinguished a mouth, a stomach, ovaries, tentacles, and even applied the name of eyes to some prominent specks on the margin. But if the aim of our science is not, simply, to adopt arbitrary designations, by which we may describe animals, in such a manner as to distinguish them with precision from any others, but to acquire an insight into their true relations, the question at once arises, how far the names in use to designate the different parts of the lower animals are justifiable, when they recall familiar organs of well-known types, allied to man himself. Is that which is called mouth, in Jellyfishes, truly a mouth? is the so-called stomach truly a stomach? are the so-called ovaries really ovaries? are their tentacles in any way comparable to those of Mollusks and Worms? have the parts designated as arms any resemblance to the upper limbs of the Vertebrates? In the present state of our knowledge of organic structures, we must unconditionally answer, that there is only a remote analogy between the parts designated under the same names in different types of the animal kingdom, and that these names were adopted, in the infancy of our science,