

monsters more complicated than the wildest fancy has conceived.

Still more complicated are the forms and economy of those many-headed monsters, which prolific nature has spread in countless multitudes over the rocky shores of the ocean, in every part of the globe. These aggregated polypi grow in imitation of plants, from a common stem, with widely extended flowering branches. Myriads of mouths open upon the surface of the animated mass; each mouth being surrounded with one or more circular rows of tentacula, which are extended to catch their prey: but as the stationary condition of these polypes prevents them from moving in search of food, their tentacula are generally furnished with a multitude of cilia, which, by their incessant vibrations, determine currents of water to flow towards the mouth, carrying with them the floating animalcules on which the entire polypus subsists.

Each mouth leads into a separate stomach; whence the food, after its digestion, passes into several channels, generally five in number, which proceed in different directions from the cavity of each stomach, dividing into many branches, and being distributed over all the surrounding portions of the flesh. These branches communicate with similar channels proceeding from the neighbouring stomachs: so that the food which has been taken in by one of the mouths, contributes to the general nourishment of the whole mass of aggregated polypi. Cuvier discovered this structure in the *Veretilla* which belongs to this order of polypi: he also found it in the *Pennatula*, and it is probably similar in all the others. Fig. 246 represents three of the polypes of the *Veretilla*, with their communicating vessels seen below. The prevailing opinion among naturalists is, that each polypus is an individual animal, associated with the rest in a sort of republic, where the labours of all are exerted for the common benefit of the whole society. But it is, perhaps, more consonant with our ideas of the nature of vitality, to consider the extent of the distribution of nutritive fluid in any organic