

Many of these productions are remarkable for being hollowed internally, and in their external shape resembling cups, bowls, and vases : several gigantic specimens of this kind were collected in India by the late lamented Sir Stamford Raffles, to whose indefatigable exertions, judicious arrangements, and uncommon ardour in her cause, science is so deeply indebted, and presented by him, with the rest of his valuable collections, to the Museum of the Zoological Society, where they are now to be seen. Their general structure also, as well as form, fits them for receiving a large quantity of water, as well as for parting with it, in proportion to the pressure, when received : in the living animal, this pressure is produced by its expansion.

What particular function, or office, has been devolved by the All-wise Creator upon these zoophytes, which are produced so rapidly, and in such numbers, on the bed of the ocean and its rocks, has not been ascertained.* As in the case of a vast variety of other marine animals, they probably derive their nutriment from the contents of the water absorbed by their tubes ; they may contribute their part to the depuration of the oceanic waters, and to the maintenance of the equilibrium amongst their inhabitants, however

* Little doubt can be entertained as to the importance of the vast tribe of sponges in the grand economy of nature, by any one who reflects upon the enormous fertility with which they are gifted. Disseminated throughout the living texture of the sponge there are found, at certain seasons, innumerable reproductive germs which, when mature, break loose into the surrounding sea. On examination with a microscope these multitudinous gemmules are seen to have their gelatinous substance covered with vibrating cilia, which constitute by their rapid movements a locomotive apparatus resembling that conferred upon many infusorial animalcules. Thus provided the embryo sponges swim about in countless myriads, living food poured forth with lavish hand, storing the waves with nutriment, and adding largely to the rich abundance of provision made for ocean's progeny.—
T. R. J.