

it. It is probably enabled, by its broad well-fixed base and rigid axis, to withstand the violent action of the strong currents of the sea just mentioned.

6. The *Floating Polypes*, which form Lamarck's last order, chiefly differ from the coral in being locomotive, and sometimes swimming freely about in the sea, though some usually remain stationary, but never fixed. Their oviform germs, like those of many other marine polypes, are ejected by the mouth. The most noted species, from its singular resemblance to a quill with its plumes, is called the sea-pen.\* It is a phosphoric animal, and emits a light so brilliant that by it the fishermen can see the fishes swimming near it, so as to be able to cast their nets.

The vast number of marine animals that are endued with the remarkable faculty of emitting light, indicate that it answers some important purpose in their economy. A fact observed by the celebrated Navigator Peron, renders it probable that its object is defence; he remarked that when the Atlantic Pyrosome† was irritated, as well as when it was contracted, its phosphorescence was augmented. A variety of hypotheses with respect to the phosphorescence of the ocean have been started; at first it was attributed to the revolutions of the earth, to electricity, &c.; then to putrescent marine animals, which certainly do emit light; but it is now generally known to be the property of a variety of the more frail inhabitants of the deep, and the above remark renders it extremely probable that it was given them by their Creator, to defend them from the attack of their enemies, whom a sudden augmentation of the intensity of their light may frighten from their purpose.

2. But the most celebrated polypes, and those which produce the most wonderful effects in some parts of the globe that we inhabit, belong to the section in which the

\* *Pennatula argentea*.

† *Pyrosoma atlanticum*.