

adhere to the skin. This faculty, which is supposed to be the lowest degree of the electric power peculiar to several fishes, is found in other genera of this tribe; for instance, the Jamaica sea-nettle\* is said to affect the hands, when touched, still more severely. Probably this faculty was given to them by Providence, either for the defence of their frail forms against their assailants, or to enable them to secure their prey, this being the general use of their numerous tentacles and other organs. Lamarck observes, that some of these animals are so large as to be more than a foot in diameter, and that some weigh as much as sixty pounds. Their multitudes are prodigious, and, as well as the *beroe*, they are said to form part of the food of the whale; they are even devoured by some of their own class. The mode by which these creatures are produced in such infinite profusion is at present unknown.† They do not reproduce mutilated parts; therefore it cannot be, as in the polypes, by the division of their bodies.

When we consider the extreme fragility and deliquescent nature of the animals constituting this order of the Radiaries, that a touch almost disorganizes their structure, and moreover that they form part of the food of the most gigantic animals in creation, we should be led to think it impossible that they could withstand all these combined actions upon them, and that, however numerous and prolific, they must at length be utterly annihilated. Nothing less, indeed, than Almighty Power, and Infinite Wisdom and Prescience, and a Goodness that is interested in the welfare of the meanest as well as the mightiest of the animals he has brought into being, could have preserved them from such a fate. He who made all things decreed their mutual relations, limited their numbers by certain laws, and appointed the means by which those laws should be executed.

\* *Physalus pelagica*.

† Vide p. 201.