

many piercing wood, and even rock, and others burrowing in the sand, sometimes to a great depth. Thus they are instructed by their instinct to form a convenient cell or other habitation, either constantly submerged, or only when the tide visits them, in which they are enabled to procure their destined food, of what nature does not appear to have been clearly ascertained, although probably animalcules, introduced when they inspire the water for respiration, may form a principal portion of it, as the majority, having no teeth for mastication, require a kind of nutriment for which it is not necessary; comparing this tribe of aquatic animals with those of the antecedent classes, we see the same object effected by different means. The *sheathed* polype* builds a house of matter elaborated in its own stomach, while the ship-borer† pierces wood, and the stone-borer the rocks, and the razor-shell‡ burrows deep in the sand with the same view; and thus each is instructed by its omniscient Creator, and fitted by its structure and organization, to accomplish the intended purpose, but by different means and instruments.

While each of these creatures has a particular and individual end in view, in its several proceedings, its own accommodation and appropriate nutriment and defence; the Creator, who has gifted them accordingly, makes use of them as instruments, which by their combined agency, though each, as it were, by a different process, accomplish, usually by slow degrees, His general purposes. This object, in the present instance, as well as in numerous others, seems to be to remove obstacles that stand in the way, and prevent certain changes willed by Providence, in the sea-line of any country, from taking place. Rocks may be regarded as so many munitions of a coast, which prevent the encroachment of the ocean, but nothing can more effectually

* See above, p. 176, n. †.

† Teredo.

‡ Solen.