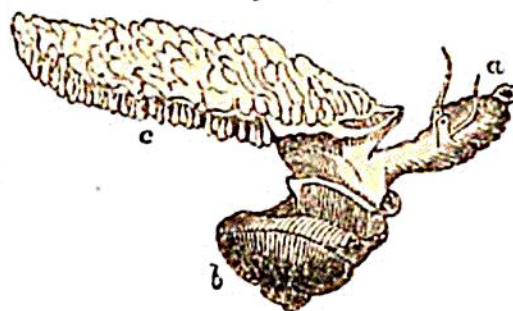


attention to them in a voyage from France to America, exhibits several very remarkable peculiarities. When the sea is calm, these animals may be seen collected often in large bands, swimming over the surface by means of a floating apparatus consisting of aërial vesicles, produced by their

foot; and attached to its posterior part, a little below the point to which the operculum is fixed in other genera, and to which Cuvier thinks it bears some analogy, who also observes that the animal has a natatory membrane or fin on each side of its body. During this action their head is very prominent, and the foot is so extended that the float or line of vesicles forms an angle with the middle of the shell. When the sea is rough, the animal absorbs the air from its vesicles, changes the direction of its foot, contracts its body, and lets itself sink. It does the same when in danger from any enemy; and further, like the cuttle-fish and some others, colours the water by the emission of a blue fluid, which serves to conceal it. They are vividly phosphoric in the night. Birds carry them off with great dexterity.

If their floating apparatus is mutilated, the foot can reproduce it. The latter is flat towards the head, this part of it is furnished with a transparent membrane, which extends far beyond its extremity, and is composed of a large number of vesicles of unequal size, those in the middle being the largest; these vesicles the animals fill with air at their pleasure. The violet-coloured shell of this little animal is remarkably thin, which facilitates its excursions on the surface. It is singular that under this fragile vesicular float a little line of pearly fibres may be perceived, to which are

Fig. 44.



Ianthina.

a. The mouth.

b. The shell.

c. The air vesicles.