

rock-shells, are not so remarkable for their size as many others which live by prey, as the strombs, the helmet-shells, and the tritons, so that their armour may sometimes prevent one of these from boring their shells, and inserting its proboscis into them.

The tribe we are now considering, the rock-shells, were in high esteem from the earliest ages, on account of the dye that some of them afforded, and cloths dyed with it bore a higher price than almost any other: more than one species, however, yielded anciently a dye; one, according to Bochart, a glaucous or azure colour, as he interprets it, and the other purple. But Tyrian purple is no longer in request. I could say much, observes the author just named, upon the finding, fishing, and method of dyeing of the purpura; about the price, formerly enormous, nearly equalling that of pearls, a single shell, according to Aristotle, selling for a mina or about 3*l*.; concerning the time at which it began gradually to grow out of fashion, and at length to be wholly neglected: so that now it is never used, and no one knows the method of preparing it. In fact, the cochineal seems to have supplanted it, but it would surely be an object of great interest to re-discover the Tyrian rock-shell, as well as that which yielded the azure colour, and ascertain how far they deserved, especially the former, the high encomiums bestowed upon them, and to deck imperial shoulders. The shells are probably still in existence on the coast of Palestine. It was the custom to crush the shell as soon as taken, for, if kept, the animal was wont to vomit its flower, as the purple dye was called by Aristotle. This great philosopher thought the purpura lived six years, as the adult animal had six whirls in its shell, and he supposed one to be formed annually. He gives a detailed history of these animals, of their congregating in the spring, and of their forming a kind of comb, like bees; he also mentions several kinds of them,