

accomplished, though how it is accomplished must always remain an unfathomable mystery.

These powers of multiplication are, however, given to these creatures for a wise and beneficent purpose. They themselves afford a supply of food to a variety of creatures—to numerous aquatic insects,¹ even polypes and worms; and to many fishes and birds, by whom their numbers are hourly and greatly diminished. As the stagnant waters likewise, in which they abound, are apt to be dried up in the summer season, many of them probably perish; but, in some, animation may be suspended till the places they inhabit are again filled with water. I have found the little animal described by Dr. Shaw, in the *Linnean Transactions*, as the *cancer stagnalis* of Linné, in horse-hoof prints, in the spring, then filled with water, but which had been previously quite dry.

The finny tribes of the world of waters seem more particularly exposed to the invasion of parasitic foes; as far as they are known there is scarcely a fish that swims that is not infested by more than one of these enemies: even the mightiest monsters of the ocean, the gigantic whale, the sagacious dolphin, the terrific and all-devouring 'shark, cannot defend themselves from them. Where they abound they doubtless generate diseases, and are amongst the means employed by a watchful Providence to keep within proper limits the inhabitants of the waters; and probably there are other benefits which our imperfect knowledge of their history prevents us from duly appreciating, that are conferred, through these animals, upon the oceanic population. Their prevalence upon the predaceous fishes, as was before observed, may tend to diminish their ravages by lessening their activity; while to those of a milder character, within certain bounds and under certain circumstances, they may be beneficial rather than injurious.