

when necessary they can sustain a fast of many weeks without other loss than what a paler colour may indicate. Small larvæ, worms, and entomostracous insects seem to be the favourite food, and to entrap these they expand the tentacula to the utmost and spread them in every direction, moving them gently in the water to increase their chances, and when a worm, &c. touches any part of them it is immediately seized, carried to the mouth by these flexible and contractile organs, and forced into the stomach. " 'Tis a fine entertainment," says Baker, " to behold the dexterity of a polype in the mastering its prey, and observe with what art it evades and overcomes the superior strength or agility thereof. Many times by way of experiment, I have put a large worm to the very extremity of a single arm, which has instantly fastened on it with its little invisible claspers. Then it has afforded me inexpressible pleasure to see the polype poisoning and balancing the worm with no less seeming caution and judgment than a skilful angler shows when he perceives a heavy fish at the end of a single hair-line, and fears it should break away. Contracting the arm that holds it, by very slow degrees, he brings it within the reach of his other arms, which eagerly clasping round it, and the danger of losing it being over, all the former caution and gentleness is laid aside, and it is pulled to the polype's mouth with a surprising violence."\* Sometimes it happens that two polypes will seize upon the same worm, when a struggle for the prey ensues, in which the strongest gains of course the victory; or each polype begins quietly to swallow his portion, and continues to gulp down his half until the mouths of the pair near and come at length into actual contact. The rest which now ensues appears to prove that they are sensible of their untoward position, from which they are frequently liberated by the opportune break of the worm, when each obtains his share, but should the prey prove too tough, woe! to the unready! The more resolute dilates the mouth to the requisite extent, and deliberately swallows his opponent, sometimes partially, so as, however, to compel the discharge of the bait, while at other times the entire polype is engulfed! But a polype is no fitting food to a polype, and his capacity of endurance saves him from this living tomb, for after a time, when the worm is sucked out of him, the sufferer is disgorged with no other loss than his dinner.† This fact is the more remarkable when it is contrasted with the fate which awaits the worms on which they feed. No sooner are these laid hold upon than they evince every symptom of painful suffering, but *their violent contortions are*

\* Hist. of the Polype, 65. Also Roget's Bridgw. Treat ii. 76

† Trembley, Mem. 112.