

gregarious, like the oyster ; while others occur singly, or in groups. The vertical range, that is, the relative depths in which the mollusca live in the sea, is also strictly defined ; certain genera being, in a great measure, restricted to moderate depths, others to a few fathoms, and many to the profound abysses of the ocean, which neither the dredge nor the plummet can reach. All these varieties of condition are more or less strongly impressed on the shells, which may be considered external skeletons ; and the accomplished conchologist is enabled, by certain characters, to determine the nature of the animals which inhabited them, and the physical conditions in which they were placed.*

The number of living species of testaceous mollusca known to naturalists exceeds six thousand ; and almost every day is adding new species, for scarcely a vessel arrives from distant seas without enriching the stores of the conchologist. The numerous genera into which they are divided by systematists, and the constant changes effected in arrangement and nomenclature by every writer on the subject, render it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to present the reader with any satisfactory epitome of modern conchology.†

* For an extended notice of the geographical distribution of testacea, see Ly. Principles, Vol. III. p. 142, sixth edition.

† The student desirous of pursuing this department of Palæontology, should refer to works especially devoted to