

or be further surrounded by calcareous deposits, the shell proper, (Fig. 101, s.) The number of these eggs is large, in proportion as the animal stands lower in the class to which it belongs. The ovary of a herring contains more than 25,000 eggs; while that of birds contains a much smaller number, perhaps one or two hundred only.

279. *Ovulation*.—Having attained a certain degree of maturity, which varies in different classes, the eggs leave the ovary. This is called *ovulation*, and must not be confounded with the laying of the eggs, which is the subsequent expulsion of them from the abdominal cavity, either immediately, or through a special canal, the *oviduct*. Ovulation takes place at certain seasons of the year, and never before the animal has reached a particular age, which is commonly that of its full growth. In a majority of species, ovulation is repeated for a number of years consecutively, generally in the spring in terrestrial animals, and frequently several times a year; most of the lower aquatic animals, however, lay their eggs in the fall, or during winter. In others, on the contrary, it occurs but once during life, at the period of maturity, and the animal soon afterwards dies. Thus the butterfly and most insects die, shortly after having laid their eggs.

280. The period of ovulation is one of no less interest to the zoölogist than to the physiologist, since the peculiar characteristics of each species are then most clearly marked. Ovulation is to animals what flowering is to plants; and, indeed, few phenomena are more interesting to the student of nature than those exhibited by animals at the pairing season. Then their physiognomy is the most animated, their song the most melodious, and their attire the most brilliant. Some birds appear so different at this time, that zoölogists are always careful to indicate whether or not a bird is represented at the breeding season. Fishes, and many other animals, are ornamented with much brighter colors at this period.