

“ It has long been known, that a very slight contact with the tentacles of a polyp is sufficient to produce, in any minute animal so touched, torpor and speedy death. Since the discovery of these *cnidæ* (lasso-cells) the fatal power has been supposed to be lodged in them. Baker, a century ago, in speaking of the Hydra, suggested that ‘there must be something eminently poisonous in its grasp;’ and this suspicion received confirmation from the circumstance that the *Entomostroma*, which are enveloped in a shelly covering frequently escape unhurt after having been seized. The stinging power possessed by many Medusæ, which is sufficiently intense to be formidable even to man, has been reasonably attributed to the same organs, which the microscope shows to be accumulated by millions in their tissues.

“ Though I cannot reduce this presumption to actual certainty, I have made some experiments, which leave no reasonable doubt on the subject. First—I have proved that the *ecthoræum* (tubular thread of the lasso-cell) when shot out, has the power of penetrating, and does actually penetrate, the tissues of even higher animals. Several years ago, I was examining one of the purple *acontia* of *Adamsia palliata*; no pressure had been used, but a considerable number of *cnidæ* had been spontaneously dislodged. It happened that I had just before been looking at the sucker-foot of an *Asterina*, which remained still attached to the glass of the aquatic box, by means of its terminal disk. The cilia of the *acontium* had, in their rowing action, brought it into contact with the sucker, round which it then continued slowly to revolve. The result I presently discovered to be, that a considerable number of *cnidæ* had shot their *ecthoræa* into the flesh of the sucking-disk of the Echinoderm, and were seen sticking all round its edge, the wires (lassos) being imbedded in its substance even up to the very capsules, like so many pins stuck around a toilet pin-cushion.

“ To test this power of penetration still farther, as well as to try whether it is brought into exercise on the contact of a foreign body with the living Anemone, I instituted the follow-