

a marginal membrane, like the fold of a mantle extending loosely downwards from the circumference; together with a central pedicle descending from the lower surface, like the stalk of a mushroom, and terminating below in several fringed laminæ, or processes, which have sometimes been denominated tentacula.

The whole substance of the body of these medusæ is semi-transparent and gelatinous, without any distinct fibrous structure; yet it has considerable elasticity, and possesses also some degree of contractile power. The animal is seen alternately to raise and depress the margin of its hemispherical body, and to flap with the fringed membrane or mantle, which descends from it, in a manner somewhat similar to the opening and shutting of a parasol. This pulsatory movement is performed about fifteen times in every minute, with great regularity: and by the reaction of the water, the animal is sustained at the surface; or by striking the water obliquely, it may even perform a slow lateral movement. They descend in the water by simply contracting their dimensions in every direction. Sometimes, in order to sink more quickly, they turn themselves over, so that their convex part is undermost.

Medusæ are met with of very various sizes; the larger abound in the seas around our coast; but immense numbers of the more minute and often microscopic species occur in every part of the ocean.* In some parts of the Greenland seas they swarm to such an extent that they give a visible tinge to the colour of the waves for hundreds of miles. The total number of these animals dispersed over that space surpasses the utmost stretch of the imagination. In these situations a cubic foot of water, taken indiscriminately, was found by Mr. Scoresby to contain above 100,000 of these diminutive medusæ.

Belonging to the tribe of Medusaria is a singular genus,

* The luminous property of sea water, or its *phosphorescence*, as it is sometimes called, generally arises from the presence of minute medusæ, which are met with in greatest numbers at the surface, being specifically lighter than the surrounding fluid.