

SEA SKETCHES.

No. 2.--*The Nautilus*

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THE landsman, who occasionally traverses the wide field of Ocean, sees few minute objects in his path so interesting as the Nautilus. It seems a specimen of natural history, which links the finny with the winged tribes; and either mimicks the inventions of man, or is the prototype of his "sea girt citadels," his "white sail'd ships." When the tall ship is pursuing a steady course on the mid-atlantic, the gazer who reclines over the bulwark, watching his vessel's course, is frequently gratified by the appearance of those minute mariners. They seem to imitate the splendor as well as the movements of the ship, and drive as fearlessly over the mighty deep, as the thunder armed leviathans of Great Britain. The size of this beautiful marine animal seems but a few inches on its different surfaces--the part resting in the water, is skiff shaped--from which it may be plainly seen to shoot up fan like membranes; from these other compartments unfurl, and catching the breeze, all fill like a perfect little sail, and bear the hull onward with considerable rapidity. They frequently seem to perform the evolutions of tacking, by rapidly shifting the position of their sails; and as far as could be ascertained, on rather a distant examination, had much perfection in locomotive power. Independent of the very curious structure and movements of those fairy ships, their appearance is very attractive. Their sails and hull seem to have a crystalline transparency, through which most lovely shades of purple float; changing according to position. from the delicate violet to the deep ardent crimson. I was not aware that they possessed the usual organs of insect tribes, that they had perception, and volition, until I was convinced by an experiment--I rather thought that they were of the species of star fish, and those other passive tribes, which seem more like ocean funguses possessed of peculiar vegetable life, than animals. I conjectured that the movement of their sails, might be the mere action of the air on very delicate membranes, and that, the Nautilus were more like beauteous weeds

Flung from the rock, on ocean foam, to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail,

than actual navigators. With these depreciatory ideas of the animation and mechanism of the nautilus, I had no conception of its possessing pugnacious qualities, or that it could defend or attack as occasion might require. The sailor, I knew, called the little fairy skiff a "Portuguese man-of-war," and I supposed the term vague, or applied in ridicule. But, an experiment, as I