

whenever I please to contract it, or let it loose---open the door or shut it. I must mention one more strange fact about my house---it has but *one room*! Please do not take this as an indication of poverty, for it is not so. I happen to be chained to both walls and could not visit, or use, other appartments if I had them. You will notice, therefore, that in one way I live a very solitary life--I can neither go out to evening parties, nor receive visits from my relations. But life is not that solitary after all, for our people congregate in large nations, and swarm even in larger multitudes than the Chinese. And then, if we do not happen to be stuck to a rock, or a log of wood, we can walk about, without feet or legs, by the rapid opening and shutting of the two walls of our houses.

How did I come to live, move, and have a being? Well! I scarcely know. Nor have my enemies, who claim to know so much about me, settled that matter as yet among themselves. They seem to have decided, however, that there are neither *ladies* nor *gentlemen* in the Oyster world, and, consequently, we know nothing of the sweet bliss of courtship, or the agonies of marriage. But, stranger still, they seem to have decided that, sometimes, I am a gentleman and sometimes a lady, and that, all things considered, I am *both lady and gentleman* wrapped up in one!

My parent had a very *large family*--you would scarcely credit me if I told you how large. That of the "old woman who lived in a shoe," was nothing to it. We sprang from tiny yellow eggs, which our parent first deposited, and then hatched, within the folds of that wonderful "mantle." Some who pretend to know declare that there were not fewer than 100,000 eggs in that "mantle." Others say there were 200,000; but a big German, not to be beaten, says there were at least 10,000,000!--surely, he had forgotten his multiplication table. At any rate, we were kept within the folds of the "mantle" until we *set up house* for ourselves. We were able to do this when we were very young and very small. I tell you, if you could only have looked upon our "*bank*," as you call it, you would have seen a wonderfully busy world. Why, whole nations of us were born in a day! For miles around the very waters were literally darkened with us, as we went waltzing about like atoms of living dust. We had a grand time of it, dancing round and round, for a few days, among waves, and rocks, and logs, and sea weed. Now, and again, we were more than a *little alarmed* as foe after foe attempted to make a meal of us. At such times we would scamper off to our parent