



THE SPIDER CRAB.—(One half natural size.)

To those who have sailed along our coast to enjoy the sport of "blue fishing," and have whiled away a few spare moments in the contemplation of the various forms of marine life, the object represented in our plate will not prove unfamiliar; and were the animal divested of its ornamentation of sea weeds it would prove no less familiar to those who frequently stroll along the beaches of Coney or Staten Island, or of the Atlantic coast generally, where the empty shell of the dead animal is rather a common object.

This unpromising looking creature is a species of long-legged crab, familiarly (and rather aptly, too) called the "sea-spider" or "spider crab," and is of an aspect scarcely less disagreeable than that of the terrestrial spider. In fact the crab, which, like the latter, belongs to the great branch of the animal kingdom, the *Articulata*, occupies a position among crustaceans equivalent to that held by the spider among other articulata. In their youngest stages crabs undergo a true metamorphosis no less striking than that of insects. The young of the crustacea are so wonderfully mimicked by the degraded forms of the young of spiders "that the two forms would seem at a casual glance hardly to belong to different genera, and the two great groups seem to run into each other here, so that their limits are scarcely distinguishable, and we only know that one is a young spider, and the other a young crustacean, by tracing their life history further on." The young in this larval condition were long ago described under the name of *zoëa*, and it is still called the *zoëa* stage. After casting the skins several times and increasing in size, the young crabs assume the "megalops" stage. Finally, at one casting of the skin the swimming legs disappear, and the little crab comes forth something like the adult form. Most of the species undergo similar changes.

The spider crab (*Libinia canaliculata*) of our Atlantic coast has a somewhat pear-shaped body, and exceedingly long legs, often spreading more than a foot across. Its back is covered with spines and tubercles. The eyes, like those of many of the crustaceans, are borne at the extremity of movable pedicles, and thus they may be turned in every direction without moving the whole body at the same time. Such a provision as this is not necessary in insects, owing to the mobility of the head of these animals; but it is absolutely indispensable in the case of crabs, where the head and thorax being consolidated into one mass, the extent of vision commanded by sessile eyes would have been extremely limited, and inadequate to the security of creatures exposed to such innumerable enemies.

The long legs of this animal remind us somewhat of those of the spider; the two anterior members are armed with slender, feeble claws only, for the animal is neither rapacious nor combative like other crabs. It will be readily seen that its defence can only be a passive one, and it is for this reason (that is, for purposes of concealment) that its shell is usually so luxuriantly adorned. In fact, the spider crab is almost always hidden among stones and seaweeds at the bottom, while other crabs frequent the shore and are continually in search of prey.

We have often fished up these creatures from the ocean and found them covered with mud, barnacles, seaweeds, and other substances which tend to conceal them from their enemies. In some foreign aquaria, where the habits of these crabs have been noted, they have been seen to seize seaweeds and polyps and place them upon their back, having first spread upon them a viscid saliva secreted by their mouth, in order to make them adhere. Seaweeds thus placed seem to grow as luxuriantly afterwards as if they had not been transplanted. Some foreign