

water. The only resource left to the Oyster when it finds itself on a muddy bottom, and the mud is being deposited slowly, is to maintain upward growth of the edges of the mantle and shell, so that the gaping slit between them is kept above the mud level. In this way is to be explained the curious crimped and curved edges of the so-called Mud-oysters, which form a considerable proportion of the Malpeque Oysters, and which since they are very difficult to open do not fetch so high a price as those of more regular shape grown on clean hard ground.

But other dangers besides starvation and suffocation threaten the Oyster. The starfish is a deadly enemy. This animal has the power of turning the stomach inside out, and of digesting alive anything with which this organ comes into contact. When the starfish gets the chance of introducing his out-turned stomach between the valves of an Oyster's shell it is all over with the Oyster.

To guard against the danger the Oyster has the power of closing the valves of the shell by means of a powerful muscle, the adductor, which runs straight across from one valve to the other. Closing the valves is equivalent to what in Man is holding the breath, but the Oyster can hold its breath for several days without suffering damage. This, nevertheless, requires a continuous effort on the part of the Oyster, for the "hinge" which unites the two valves is so placed with reference to the teeth with which the one valve articulates on the other, that it is compressed when the valves are closed, and its elastic recoil tends to open the valves as soon as the pull of the adductor muscle is relaxed.

In most Lamellibranchiata there are two adductors, but the anterior one has been lost in the Oyster; the hinge, too, is usually so placed that it is stretched and not compressed when the valves are closed, but of course the effect is the same.

Everyone knows that it is necessary to cut the adductor in order to "open" a live oyster. When, however, the Oyster, placed under unfavourable circumstances,