

told, again, that I have *lungs*. Still, though my house is somewhat damp, and the climate rather humid, cases of pneumonia are unknown in the family, and the only consumption dreaded is that of the human gourmand who consumes us wholesale, *vi et armis*. I can breathe at the bottom of the sea, without difficulty, for I have a faculty for separating and breathing what little air the water contains, and that is sufficient for me.

To be an honest Oyster, I should tell you that I belong to a race called "*Molluscs*," and so am a grey, soft, flabby, boneless, voiceless creature, without the power to gossip with my neighbors, or abuse my friends. I cannot tell my own tail—I have no tail!—I am telling my autobiography, never mind how! I have plenty of blood, however,—real aristocratic *blue blood*,—much the color of milk, after the milkman has skimmed off the cream and supplied its place with water. I commenced *house-keeping* on my own account, when I was quite a baby. My house, moreover, is my own property. In building it, I did not advertise for tenders, and so have had no swindling bills for "Extras": I pay neither rent nor taxes, and I am supplied with oceans of water, without any dread that the Corporation man will come round to turn it off. Who built the house I know not; but I have always supposed that it "*grewed*," like Topsy. It appeared, however, to grow about one inch in diameter per year, for the first three years; but after that it grew but slowly. The *architecture*, without exaggeration, may be described as, peculiar. In style it is much like those of my cousins: the Mussel and the Clam—but, if those relations of mine attempted to copy my habitation, I can only say that the attempt has not been a very great success. Their houses bulge out on both sides, while mine only bulges out on one. They laugh at me, and tell me that the outward appearance of theirs is far more attractive than mine,—but some people like to make a show in the world. I never saw the outside of my house, although I may have seen that of my neighbor's. But what care I for the outside appearance? Give me comfort and elegance at home? Only look at the *inside* of my place,—why, every speck of its walls is beautifully decorated with "Mother of Pearl," as the home of a respectable Oyster ought to be! It may appear strange, but my house has neither fireplace, chimney, foundation, nor gable wall. It has but two side walls, for which reason I am called a "*bi-valve*." One wall is flat—the other is a little the other way. Both are joined, at the back, by a kind of *hinge* made out of some tough sinewy material, which acts much like a spring,