It took notice of riots, murder, forgery, felony, perjury, fraud, libel and slander, duels and acts tending to treason, as well as of some civil matters, such as disputes about land between great men and corporations, disputes between English and foreign merchants, and testamentary cases; in fact, as Hudson says, "all offences may be here examined and punished if the king will.” Its procedure was not according to the common law. It dispensed with the encumbrance of a jury; it could proceed on rumour alone; it could apply torture; it could inflict any penalty but death. It was thus admirably calculated to be the support of order against anarchy, or of despotism against individual and national liberty. During the Tudor period it appeared in the former light, under the Stuarts in the latter. Under the Tudors, as S. R. Gardiner says, it was “a tribunal constantly resorted to as a resource against the ignorance or prejudices of a country jury,” and adds that “in such inves­tigations it showed itself intelligent and impartial.” Under James I. and Charles I. all this was changed; the star chamber became the great engine of the royal tyranny. Hateful and excessive punishments were inflicted on those brought before the court, notable among whom were Prynne, Bastwick and Burton, and the odium which it gathered around it was one of the causes which led to the popular discontent against Charles I. As it became more unpopular its jurisdiction was occasionally ques­tioned. An example of this kind occurred in 1629, but the barons of the exchequer who heard the case declared that the star chamber was created many years before the statute of Henry VII. and that it was “ one of the most high and honour­able courts of justice.” It was abolished by an act of parlia­ment of July 1641. In 1661 a committee of the House of Lords reported “ that it was fit for the good of the nation that there be a court of like nature to the star chamber ”; but nothing further was done in the matter.

For the history of the star chamber see Sir Thomas Smith, *Commonwealth of England* (1633) ; Lord Bacon, *History of Henry VII.,* edited by J. R. Lumby (Cambridge, 1881); William Hudson, "Treatise of the Court of Star Chamber,” in vol. ii. of *Collectanea Juridica*; H. Hallam, *Constitutional History of England* (1876); W. S. Holdsworth, *History of English Law* (fol. 1902); G. W. Prothero, *Statutes and Constitutional Documents 1559-1625* (1894); W. Busch, *England under the Tudors* (1895) ; S. R. Gardiner, *History of England 1603-1642* (1883-1884); D. J. Medley, *English Con­stitutional History* (1907); and A. V. Dicey, *The Privy Council.* The pleadings in the star chamber are in the Record Office, London; the decrees appear to have been lost.

**STARFISH, a** popular term under which are included a large4 number of sea-animals, belonging all to the great group of Echino­derms, but to three dis­tinct divisions of that group: the Asterids, the Ophiurids and the Crinoids (see Echino­derma). The Asterids or starfish proper in­clude the cross-fish, the sun-star (see Echino­derma, fig. 17), the cushion-star, the butt-horn, and many with­out a popular name. The common cross-fish or five-finger, *Asterias rubens,* of British seas, may be taken as typical (figs. 1 and 2), and the description will apply also to the American species *A. forbesi* and

*A. vulgaris.* The animal consists of a central body or disk, produced into five arms or rays. The upper surface is covered with a leathery skin, strengthened by a rafter-work of little bones or plates, made of crystalline carbonate of lime, many of them bearing prickles of the same substance and small pincer-like bodies—the pedicellariae (see Sea-Urchin). In the middle of the body is a small anal opening, and near the angle between two rays is a furrowed plate pierced by many minute pores and called the madreporite. The under surface of the body has the mouth in the centre, and from it deep grooves radiate to the ends of the arms. At the bottom of each groove is a water-vessel, which gives off branches to the podia or sucking-feet on each side of it.

A section across this groove is given in the article Echinoderma, fig. 12 B. The arrange­ment and working of this hydraulic system is essentially the same as in the sea-urchin, except for the presence of plates at the bottom of the groove beneath the radial water-vessel, and the absence of any plates covering the groove. At the end of each ray is, as in the urchin, a single tentacle surrounded by pigment and connected with a definite plate called “ terminal.” Thus the terminals of a starfish cor­respond to the oculars of a sea-urchin (see Echinoderma, fig. 3). The stomach is not a long coil, but a simple sac with branched blind tubes extending into each ray. A generative gland also passes down the side of each ray, and emits the milt or eggs when ripe through a pore near the body. Spawning takes place in spring or early summer. A starfish can crawl in any direction by means of its sucking-feet, whether the surface be hard or rough or polished, or the softest silt, whilst its supple body can squeeze through incredibly narrow crevices. The rate of progress is about six inches a minute.

The starfish are the scavengers of the sea, but unfortunately do not confine their attentions to decaying matter; they eat oysters, clams, mussels, barnacles, sea-snails, worms, crustacea and even smaller starfish. There is constant war between oyster-fishers and starfish; no less than 42,000 bushels of starfish were removed from the oyster-beds of Connecticut in a single year, but not till they had worked damage to the amount of $631,500. The simplest way in which a starfish eats is by taking small bits of food into the stomach, and ejecting the refuse again through the mouth. But, since the mouth is quite small and the food often large, the starfish finds it more convenient to turn its stomach inside out and to wrap it around the animal to be eaten, which is then digested quietly and the stomach withdrawn again. In the case of oysters and similar bivalves, the starfish first has to open them; and this it does by fixing the suckers of one or two rays to one valve and those of the opposite rays to the other valve, while it may get a purchase by also holding on to some neighbouring object. It then begins to straighten out its rays. The oyster can withstand a very strong pull, but it cannot hold out against a long pull, and the starfish does not hurry. At last the oyster gives way, and the starfish has its reward; but its companions often join in, and you may see a whole ball of them interlaced round half-digested molluscs and rolling about. Starfish begin to eat voraciously when quite young; one less than 3/8th in. across has been observed to eat over fifty young clams of half that length in six days. The more a starfish has to eat the quicker it grows, and it may become sexually mature in less than a year, then producing many thousands of young. Fortunately the increase is kept in check by many causes. The young, while still in the stage of free-swimming larvae, are swallowed in millions by various fish. When they settle down on seaweed their bright colours attract eels and many small fishes. Later in life they are attacked by parasites, while those which stray into shallow water are eaten by gulls and crows. Freshets and cold currents are also destructive.

Probably the best way in which man can keep down the numbers of starfish is by dredging the seaweed in the latter half of July when it is covered with young; a single cartload thrown on shore would capture many millions. At a later stage tangles of hemp or cotton waste may be dragged over the oyster-beds, when the starfish will cling to them by their pedicellariae. They make excellent manure, but are of no further service to man. Fishermen who catch them in their nets or on their lines often tear them in half and throw them back into the sea. Some of these mutilated.