or gelatinous substance of a pale blue colour, which is studded over with stellular polypi. This figure (Pl. V. fig. 7) represents a branch of coral with several polypi, highly magnified, as seen alive in the water. The cortical substance is removed from the extremities, and the red stony axis exposed. As the polypiferous centres only are composed of the animal crust which after death rapidly undergoes decomposition, no traces of their structure remain on the durable skeleton.

The red coral, as is well known, is so dense and compact as to bear a high polish; it is obtained by dredging in different parts of the Mediterranean and Eastern seas, and forms an important article of commerce. It varies much in hue, according to its situation in the sea: in shallow water it is of the most beautiful colour, a free admission of light appearing necessary for its full development. It is of slow growth; eight or ten years, in a moderate depth of water, being necessary for it to reach maturity. Arrived at this period it extends, but very slowly, and is soon pierced on all sides by those destructive animals which attack even the hardest rocks; it loses its solidity, and the slightest shock detaches it from its base. Becoming the sport of the waves, the polypi perish, their brilliant skeleton is exposed, and thrown upon the shore; the bright colour soon disappears, and the coral is reduced to fragments by the attrition of the waves, or, mixed with the remains of shells and other