

28. CORAL REEFS.—I have already alluded to the vast accumulations of calcareous rocks in tropical seas, resulting from the consolidation of the disintegrated skeletons of polyparia; but the physical changes that are produced by such apparently inadequate means require farther consideration, since they illustrate the formation of the coralline rocks, which will hereafter come under our notice.

In the *flustra foliacea* of our coast (page 526), delicate and brittle though it be, we perceive the elements of those important changes to which the large lamellar corals of tropical seas are giving birth. In the specimen before us, you may observe that the base of the mass of *flustra*, which is about six inches in diameter, is already consolidated by an aggregation of sand, which has filled up the interstices. On the surface are numerous parasitical shells and corals, and between the convolutions of its foliated expansions, echini, crustacea, and other animals, have taken shelter; while sand and mud have invested every cranny of the lower third of the specimen, and imbedded *serpulæ*, *sabellæ*, and fragments of many species of shells. It is evident, that were the whole specimen filled up and surrounded by such detritus, as it shortly would be in its native element, a solid block would be formed, exhibiting, when broken, the remains of the *flustra*, impacted in a conglomerate of sand, shells, and corals. Thus we perceive that even the delicate, friable skeleton of the *flustra* of our shores may form