

the nucleus of a solid rock ; and in the process I have described, we have, as it were in miniature, the formation of a coral reef.

29. CORAL REEF OF LOO CHOO.—But it is in tropical seas that the meandrinæ, astreæ, caryophylliæ, and other stony corals, form those immense masses, which not only give rise to groups of islands in the bosom of the ocean, but are gradually forming tracts of such extent, that a new continent may spring up where the fabled Atalantis once flourished. From the many interesting descriptions of the nature and formation of coral reefs, and islands, that have been published by our voyagers, I select the following graphic account, by Captain Basil Hall, of a coral reef near the great island of Loo Choo.

“When the tide has left the rock for some time dry, it appears to be a compact mass, exceedingly hard and rugged : but as the water rises, and the waves begin to wash over it, the polypi protrude themselves from holes which were before invisible. These animals are of a great variety of shapes and sizes, and in such prodigious numbers, that in a short time the whole surface of the rock appears to be alive and in motion. The most common form is that of a star, with arms, or tentacula, which are moved about with a rapid motion in all directions, probably to catch food. Others are so sluggish that they may be mistaken for pieces of the rock, and are generally of a dark colour. When the coral is broken about high-water mark, it is a solid