

supposed to have been formed in the shallows, or near the shores of that ancient sea. About 150 species of zoophytes have been discovered in the cretaceous deposits; and in some localities entire strata of chalk are composed, like the modern calcareous beds of the Bermudas, of the detritus of polyparia.

34. RECENT FORMATION OF CHALK FROM CORALS.—In reference to the formation of coral limestones, I may too observe, that some beds of those deposits, in which the decomposition of the calcareous zoophytes is complete, consist of a pure calcareous mud, which when consolidated cannot be distinguished from chalk, as you may observe in the specimens before us, collected by Lieutenant Nelson. It appears from the observations of that gentleman, that on the shoals where these corals abound, the dead polyparia are continually decomposing, and the white mud thus produced is carried away by the waves, and deposited in the tranquil depths of the ocean. Mr. Darwin has also remarked a similar operation in the Pacific, where disintegration of the coral reefs and islands give rise to vast accumulations of a calcareous debris, which when dry closely resembles soft chalk.

In the Danish islands of Seeland and Möen, the flinty chalk is covered by beds of coral limestone, some portions of which form a compact building-stone, while others are a mere mass of corals cemented together by white chalk. These beds are shown by Mr. Lyell to belong to the chalk formation;