

secreted by the uniting medium, which varies in its nature from a mere gelatinous, or horny material, to an earthy, calcareous, and even siliceous frame-work, that remains when the polypes die, and their soft parts decompose. All the beautiful varieties of corals, &c. are nothing more than the solid skeletons of aggregated masses of polypes. But I must refer the reader to the Sixth Lecture in the *Wonders of Geology* for a familiar exposition of this subject, and of the nature and economy of the living coral-animals.

It may here be necessary to notice a prevailing error, regarding the mode in which the substances called corals are produced. It is very generally supposed that corals, particularly those covered by stars and cells, have been constructed by the polypes, in the same manner as the honey-comb, by the Bee; and the expressions often employed by naturalists, of "the coral animalcules building up their rocky habitations," and "constructing their cells in a particular manner," have contributed to perpetuate this error. But the cases are in no respect similar: the Bee, under the guidance of an unerring instinct, resulting from its peculiar organization, does mechanically construct its cells; but the polype is incapable of forming, or even modifying, its support or cell in the slightest degree. The frame-work, or skeleton, is *secreted* by the animal tissues, in the same manner as are the bones and other structures, in the higher order of animals, without