

## CHAPTER XX

Keeling Island—Singular Appearance—Scanty Flora—Transport of Seeds—Birds and Insects—Ebbing and flowing Springs—Fields of dead Coral—Stones Transported in the Roots of Trees—Great Crab—Stinging Corals—Coral-eating Fish—Coral Formations—Lagoon Islands or Atolls—Depth at which reef-building Corals can Live—Vast Areas interspersed with low Coral Islands—Subsidence of their Foundations—Barrier Reefs—Fringing Reefs—Conversion of Fringing Reefs into Barrier Reefs, and into Atolls—Evidence of Changes in Level—Breaches in Barrier Reefs—Maldiva Atolls; their peculiar Structure—Dead and Submerged Reefs—Areas of Subsidence and Elevation—Distribution of Volcanoes—Subsidence slow, and Vast in Amount

## KEELING ISLAND—CORAL FORMATIONS

**A**PRIL 1ST.—We arrived in view of the Keeling or Cocos Islands, situated in the Indian Ocean, and about six hundred miles distant from the coast of Sumatra. This is one of the lagoon-islands (or atolls) of coral formation, similar to those in the Low Archipelago which we passed near. When the ship was in the channel at the entrance, Mr. Liesk, an English resident, came off in his boat. The history of the inhabitants of this place, in as few words as possible, is as follows. About nine years ago, Mr. Hare, a worthless character, brought from the East Indian archipelago a number of Malay slaves, which now, including children, amount to more than a hundred. Shortly afterward, Captain Ross, who had before visited these islands in his merchant-ship, arrived from England, bringing with him his family and goods for settlement: along with him came Mr. Liesk, who had been a mate in his vessel. The Malay slaves soon ran away from the islet on which Mr. Hare was settled, and joined Captain Ross's party. Mr. Hare upon this was ultimately obliged to leave the place.