animals of the forest are disappearing or moving westward as the forests are clearing up. Since the discovery of the island of South Georgia, 1771, one million two hundred thousand seal skins have been annually taken from thence; and nearly as many more from the Island of Desolation. The animal is becoming extinct at these islands. Some have maintained that the climate of Europe is very much warmer than in the times of the Roman Emperors, and have supposed that the extinction of animals is caused by this change.

## FORMATION OF CORAL REEFS OR ISLANDS.

Coral reefs are ridges of calcareous rock, whose basis is coral, (chiefly of the genera Porites, Astræa, Madrepora, Meandrina, and Caryophyllia), and whose interstices and surface are covered by broken fragments of the same, with broken shells and echini, and sand, all cemented together by calcareous matter. They are built up by the polypi, apparently on the tops of submarine ridges, and sometimes perhaps, though not generally, on the margins of ancient volcanic craters, beneath the ocean, not generally from a depth greater than twenty-five or thirty feet, yet sometimes 120 or 130 feet. The polypi continue to build until the ridge gets to the surface of the sea at low water; after which the sea washes upon it fragments of coral, drift wood, etc., and a soil gradually accumulates, which is at length occupied by animals with man at their head. The reefs are sometimes arranged in a circular manner, with a lagoon in the centre, where, in water, a few fathoms deep, grow an abundance of delicate species of corals, and other marine animals, whose beautiful forms and colors rival the richest flower garden. Volcanic agency often lifts the reef Fig. 115.



Whitsunday; a Coral Island.