

seas are commonly “ narrow, low ledges of coral
“ rock, including in the middle a kind of lagoon ;
“ and having here and there little sandy spots,
“ somewhat elevated above the level of high
“ water, on which cocoa-nuts thrive :” corre-
spondent with which description is the account
given by captain Cook, on the occasion of dis-
covering one of these coral reefs ; which was at
first mistaken by him for land. “ This proved to
“ be,” he says, “ another of those low or half-
“ drowned islands, or rather a large coral shoal,
“ of about twenty leagues in circuit. A very
“ small part of it was land, which consisted of
“ little islets ranged along the north side, and
“ connected by sand-banks and breakers. These
“ islets were clothed with wood, among which the
“ cocoa-nut trees were only distinguishable. We
“ ranged the south side of this shoal at the dis-
“ tance of one or two miles from the coral bank,
“ against which the sea broke in a dreadful surf.
“ In the middle of the shoal was a large lake, or
“ inland sea, in which was a canoe under sail.”
(Cook’s Voyage, 4to. 1777. vol. i. p. 141, 142.)

Coral, considered as an individual substance, is a natural form of carbonate of lime, produced by an animal of the polype kind. The particles of carbonate of lime, however produced, are cemented together so firmly by a glutinous secretion of the same animal, as to acquire a degree of consistence, which not only forms a safe