

terior of the structure seems gradually to shelve off; so that about the centre of the inclosed, or partially inclosed space, the sea is found of its natural depth. Correspondently with such an arrangement, it happens usually that the soundings gradually lessen from the centre of the area inclosed by a coral reef, towards the exterior ridge; and then suddenly sink to two hundred fathoms or more.

To the foregoing observations I shall subjoin the opinion of captain Flinders on the process observed by nature in the formation of coral reefs. "It seems to me," he says, "that
" when the animalcules, which form the coral
" at the bottom of the ocean, cease to live, their
" structures adhere to each other by virtue
" either of the glutinous remains within, or of
" some property in salt water; and the inter-
" stices being gradually filled up with sand and
" broken pieces of coral washed by the sea,
" which also adhere, a mass of rock is at length
" formed. Future races of these animalcules
" erect their habitations upon the rising bank,
" and die in their turn; to increase, but princi-
" pally to elevate, this monument of their won-
" derful labours. The care taken to work per-
" pendicularly, in the early stages, would mark
" a surprising instinct in these diminutive crea-
" tures. Their wall of coral, for the most part
" in situations where the winds are constant,