

The same system appears to have prevailed from the first commencement of life in the most ancient seas, throughout that long series of ages whose duration is attested by the varied succession of animal and vegetable exuvixæ, which are buried in the strata of the earth. In all these strata the calcareous habitations of such minute and apparently unimportant creatures as Polypes, have formed large and permanent additions to the solid materials of the globe, and afford a striking example of the influence of animal life upon the mineral condition of the earth.*

If there be one thing more surprising than another in the investigation of natural phenomena, it is perhaps the infinite extent and vast importance of things apparently little and insignificant.

* Among the Corals of the Transition Series are many existing genera, and Mr. de la Beche has justly remarked (*Manual of Geology*, p. 454) that wherever there is an accumulation of Polypifers such as would justify the appellation of coral banks or reefs, the genera *Astrea* and *Caryophyllia* are present; genera which are among architects of coral reefs in the present seas.

A large part of the Limestone called *Coral Rag*, which forms the elevated plains of Bullington and Cunmer, and the hills of Wytham, on three sides of the valley of Oxford, is filled with continuous beds and ledges of petrified corals of many species, still retaining the position in which they grew at the bottom of an ancient sea; as coral banks, are now forming in the intertropical regions of the present ocean.

The same fossil coralline strata extend through the calcareous hills of the N. W. of Berkshire, and N. of Wilts; and again recur in equal or still greater force in Yorkshire, in the lofty summits on the W. and S. W. of Scarborough.