

minute, which is necessary to the general welfare. Doubtless, in their creation, He who inhabiteth eternity, to whose view all time as well as all space is present, had in view the benefit of his creature man, to whom they form a very useful present, and which he has long applied to his purposes. Sponges were in use as early as Aristotle's time, when the people that employed themselves in collecting them observed, that when they attempted to pluck them up they appeared to resist, whence they concluded they had some sensation.* They now form a very considerable article of commerce. The fishery for them is chiefly carried on in the Mediterranean, particularly in the Grecian Archipelago. The collection of them is attended with danger, as they are fixed to the rocks at the depth of several fathoms, so that the sponge-fishers must be excellent divers. Tournefort says, that no youth in these islands is allowed to marry, till he has given proofs of his capacity in this respect. Amongst plants, as Mr. W. S. Mac Leay has, I think, remarked, sponges present some analogy to the puff-balls.†

5. A *fifth* Order of polypes, worthy of attention, is that to which the *red coral* belongs; in these the animal, instead of being covered, or in any way sheltered by its polypary, invests it completely, so as to form a kind of bark over every part of it; on this account the name has been changed by writers on these animals, and it is denominated their *axis*, since upon it they are, as it were, suspended, and run their prescribed race. This axis consists of a much more rigid, solid, and lapidose substance than the polypary of the really *sheathed* polypes, presenting when polished the smooth substance and lustre of marble, without any appearance of pores or other orifices—when broken it exhibits the same

* Aristot. Hist. Anim. b. i. c. 1, comp. b. v. c. 16.

† Lycoperdon.