

kind of fracture as a stick of red sealing-wax: this description refers particularly to the red coral,* for in some other genera belonging to the Order the axis is jointed,† and in others very flexible.‡ The sheathed corallines appear in some sort to be analogues of those animals whose bodies are covered and defended by an external crust or shell, like the Testaceous Molluscans, the Crustaceans, and the Insects; while the tribe in question, especially those having a jointed axis, present some analogy to the vertebrated animals, in which the muscles cover the bones. It should seem, from the solid and compact substance generated by them, that these Polytes absorb from the sea-water a greater quantity of the matter which is converted into carbonate of lime than the rest of the class, so as to enable them to condense it into the smallest compass, and therefore Providence has gifted them with the faculty of making up in *virtue*, so to speak, what they may want in *volume*. A single-stemmed species, however, belonging to the flexible genus *Antipathes*, found by Professor Eschscholtz, on the north-west coast of America, was ten feet long. The foot, or base by which the common coral is attached to the rocks, as indeed is the case with the whole section to which it belongs, is remarkably expanded; it rises at first with a single stem of varying magnitude, which soon divides into a small number of branches, in their turn dividing and subdividing irregularly into a great number of others, so as to resemble a leafless shrub, rising to the height of about eighteen inches. After pearls, this is the most precious production of the ocean, and has always been a valuable article of commerce. As well as the common sponge, it is principally the produce of the Mediterranean, and is formed with such rapidity, that a place which has been quite exhausted by the coral fishermen, in the course of a very few years, is again replenished with

* Corallium.

† Isis, &c.

‡ Antipathes, Gorgonia.