

Several different tribes of madrepora contribute to form these coral reefs ; but by far the most abundant are those of the genera *carophylla*, *astrea* and *meandrina*. These lithophytic animals not only add to the magnitude of land already existing, but, according to some naturalists, they form whole islands. Dr Forster, in his Observations made during a Voyage round the World, gives an account of the formation of these coral islands in the South Sea.

All the low isles, he says, seem to me to be a production of the sea, or rather its inhabitants, the polype-like animals forming the lithophytes. These animalcules raise their habitation gradually from a small base, always spreading more and more, in proportion as the structure grows higher. The materials are a kind of lime mixed with some animal substances. I have seen these large structures in all stages, and of various extent. Near Turtle Island, we found, at a few miles distance, and to leeward of it, a considerable large circular reef, over which the sea broke every where, and no part of it was above water ; it included a large deep lagoon. To the east and north-east of the Society Isles, are a great many isles, which in some parts are above water ; in others, the elevated parts are connected by reefs, some of which are dry at low water, and others are constantly under water. The elevated parts consist of a soil formed by a sand of shells and coral rocks, mixed with a light black mould, produced from putrified vegetables, and the dung of sea-fowls ; and are commonly covered by cocoa-nut trees and other shrubs, and a few antiscorbutic plants. The lower parts have only a few shrubs and the above plants ; others still lower, are washed by the sea at high-water. All these isles are connected, and include a lagoon in the middle, which is full of the finest fish ; and