

dium of the cementing calcareous sand, which has arisen from the pulverization of the above mentioned shells into one whole or solid stone, which, strengthened by the continual throwing up of new materials, gradually increases in thickness till it at last becomes so high, that it is covered only during some seasons of the year by the high tides. The heat of the sun so penetrates the mass of stone when it is dry, that it splits in many places, and breaks of in flakes. These flakes, so separated, are raised one upon another by the waves at the time of high water. The always active surf throws blocks of coral, (frequently of a fathom in length, and three or four feet thick,) and shells of marine animals, between and upon the foundation stones; after this the calcareous sand lies undisturbed, and offers to the seeds of trees and plants, cast upon it by the waves, a soil upon which they rapidly grow, to overshadow its dazzling white surface. Entire trunks of trees, which are carried by the rivers from other countries and islands, find here, at length, a resting place after their long wanderings; with them come some small animals, such as lizards and insects, as the first inhabitants. Even before the trees form a wood, the real sea-birds nestle here; strayed land-birds take refuge in the bushes; and at a much later period, when the work has been long since completed, man also appears, builds his hut on the fruitful soil formed by the corruption of the leaves of the trees, and calls himself lord and proprietor of this new creation.

In the preceding account, we have seen how the exterior edge of a submarine coral edifice first approaches the surface of the water, and how this reef gradually assumes the properties of land; the island, therefore, necessarily has a circular form, and in the middle of it an