

## CHAPTER VIII.

FOSSIL ZOOPHYTES; COMPRISING THE AMORPHOZOA AND  
THE POLYPIARIA.

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THE extraordinary beings whose mineralized skeletons are the subject of our present investigation, have largely contributed to the formation of the solid materials of the crust of the earth. In the earliest, or most ancient strata in which traces of animal organization can be detected, Zoophytes hold a conspicuous place; and in the deposits which are in progress at the present time, along the shores, and beneath the seas of warm and tropical climates, the coral animalcules are laying the foundations of new islands and continents, and producing reefs of rock hundreds of miles in extent, which, when elevated above the waters in future ages, will rival in magnitude and extent the mountain chains of modern Europe. The reader who is unacquainted with the natural history of these marvellous creatures, will find a familiar account of their nature and economy, in the sixth lecture of the *Wonders of Geology*, Vol. II. p. 503; and a lucid sketch of