

corals attained, in some species, a diameter of several feet. No doubt the colours, among the coral polyps and other life of the ancient seas, were as brilliant as now exist.

Nature's economist here puts the question—Why all this beauty when there were no eyes to enjoy it? But beauty exists because, “in the beginning,” “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;” and man finds delight therein inasmuch as he bears the image of his Maker.

A single recent species has been obtained by Mr. L. F. de Pourtales, in dredging at a depth of 324 fathoms, near the Florida reef, which may be a Cyathophylloid, although it has been supposed that the species of the tribe have been extinct since the middle of the Mesozoic era. It was half an inch high and broad, and the polyp-cell had eight septa—a *multiple of four*, as in the true Cyathophylloids. The discoverer has named it *Haplophyllia paradoxa*. But he observes that it may after all be only an abnormal Actinoid.

III. ALCYONOID POLYPS.

The name *Alcyonium*, given to some of the species of this group, is derived from Alcyone, the fabled daughter of Neptune. It is sometimes written with an initial H, in conformity with the aspirate of the Greek word; but Latin authors usually omitted the H, and this has been good enough authority for Linnæus and the majority of later writers.

The Alcyonoids include some of the gayest and most delicate of coral shrubs. Almost all are flexible, and wave with the motion of the waters. They contribute but little to the material of coral reefs, but add largely to the beauties of the coral landscape. Not only are the polyps of handsome tints, but the whole shrub is usually of a brilliant orange, yellow, scarlet, crimson or purple shade. Dun colours also occur, as ash-grey, and dark brown, and almost black. Some kinds, the Spongodiæ, are too flexible to stand erect, and they hang from the coral ledges, or in the coral caves, in gorgeous clusters of scarlet, yellow, and crimson colours.