

CHAPTER II.

STRUCTURE OF CORAL REEFS AND ISLANDS.

CORAL reefs and coral islands are structures of the same kind under somewhat different conditions. They are made in the same seas, by the same means; in fact, a coral island has in all cases been a coral reef through a large part of its history, and is so still over much of its area. The terms, however, are not synonymous. *Coral islands* are reefs that stand isolated in the ocean, away from other lands, whether now raised only to the water's edge and half submerged, or covered with vegetation; while the term *coral reef*, although used for reefs of coral in general, is more especially applied to those which occur along the shores of high islands and continents. There are peculiarities in each making it convenient to describe them separately.

I. CORAL REEFS.

GENERAL FEATURES.

Coral reefs are banks of coral rock built upon the seabottom about the shores of tropical lands. In the Pacific, these lands, with the exception of New Caledonia and others of large size to the westward, are islands of volcanic or igneous rocks, and they often rise to mountain heights. The coral reefs which skirt their shores are ordinarily wholly submerged at high