

CHAPTER III.

FORMATION OF CORAL REEFS AND ISLANDS, AND CAUSES OF THEIR FEATURES.

I. FORMATION OF REEFS.

I. ORIGIN OF CORAL SANDS AND THE REEF-ROCK.

VERY erroneous ideas prevail respecting the appearance of a bed or area of growing corals. The submerged reef is often thought of as an extended mass of coral, alive uniformly over its upper surface, and as gradually enlarging upward through this living growth; and such preconceived views, when ascertained to be erroneous by observation, have sometimes led to skepticism with regard to the zoöphytic origin of the reef-rock. Nothing is wider from the truth: and this must have been inferred from the descriptions already given. Another glance at the coral plantation should be taken by the reader, before proceeding with the explanations which follow.

Coral plantation and coral field are more appropriate appellations than coral garden, and convey a juster impression of the surface of a growing reef. Like a spot of wild land, covered in some parts, even over acres, with varied shrubbery, in other parts bearing only occasional tufts of vegetation in barren plains of sand, here a clump of saplings, and there a carpet of variously-coloured flowers in these barren fields—such is the coral plantation. Numerous kinds of zoöphytes .