

Mr. Darwin, in discussing the origin of the finer calcareous mud (op, cit., p. 14), supposes that it is derived in part from fishes and Holothurians; and other authors have thrown out the same suggestion. He cites as a fact, on the authority of Mr. Liesk, that certain fish browse on the living zoöphytes; and from Mr. Allan, of Forres, he learned also that Holothurians subsisted on them. With regard to the facts here stated, no positive asertion can be made. Small fish swarm about the branching clumps, and when disturbed, seek shelter at once among the branches, where they are safe from pursuit. The author has often witnessed this, and never saw reason to suppose that they clustered about the coral for any other purpose. It is an undoubted fact, as stated by Mr. Darwin, that fragments of coral and sand may be found in the stomachs of these animals, but this is not sufficient evidence of their browsing on the coral. Fish so carefully avoid polyps of all kinds because of their power of stinging (as illustrated on p. 16), that we should wait for further and direct evidence on this point. The conclusion deduced by him from the facts, may be justly doubted. The fish and Holothurians, though numerous, are quite inadequate for the supply; and, moreover, we have, as explained above, an abundant source of the finest coral material without such aid. Motion of particle over particle will necessarily wear to dust, even though the particles be diamonds; and this incessant grinding action about reefs accounts satisfactorily for the deposits of coral mud, however great their extent.

The coral world, as we thus perceive, is planted, like the land with a variety of shrubs and smaller plants, and the elements and natural decay are producing gradual accumulations of material, like those of vegetation. The history of the growing reef has consequently its counterpart among the ordinary occurrences of the land about us.

The progress of the coral formation is like its commencement. The same causes continue, with similar results, and the reader might easily supply the details from the facts already presented. The production of débris will necessarily continue