

In the base of a coral island of the above description, captain Flinders distinguished not only the sand, coral, and shells, formerly thrown up, in a more or less perfect state of cohesion; but also small pieces of wood, pumice-stone, and other extraneous bodies, which chance had mixed with the calcareous substances when the cohesion began, and which in some cases were still separable from the rock without much force^k. Such sand-banks are found in different stages of progress; some being overflowed with every returning tide; some raised above high-water mark, but destitute of vegetation; some, lastly, habitable and abounding in trees.

Let us here pause for a moment to contemplate the wonderful effect produced by apparently the most inadequate means. And wonderful indeed is the effect, even if the process above described were now to cease for ever; but much more, if we look to its probable extension: for, reasoning on what has already been accomplished, and on what is at this moment rapidly advancing, it is evidently probable that a new habitable surface of land may be eventually produced, equal in extent to the whole of Europe, and produced by the agency of a tribe of animals, which occupy very nearly the lowest steps in the scale of animal creation, and which in every other respect are the most inefficient

^k Flinders's Voyage, vol. ii. p. 116.