

in multitudes. How obedient and affectionate, then, ought children to be to those who love them so tenderly and constantly !

CORAL ISLANDS.

Many of our young friends have read that some of the islands in the South Seas have coral reefs round them, and that some of the islands themselves are composed of coral. Several writers have described them. Dr. Mantell, in his "Wonders of Geology," gives the following beautiful abstract of their observations :—

• The coral banks are everywhere seen in different stages of progress ; some are become islands, but not yet habitable ; others are above high water-mark, but destitute of vegetation, while many are overflowed with every returning tide. When the polypi (the little living animals) of the corals at the bottom of the ocean cease to live, their skeletons still adhere to each other, and the interstices being gradually filled up with sand and broken pieces of coral and shell, washed in by the sea, a mass of rock is at length formed. Future races of these animalcules spread out upon the rising bank, and in their turn die, increase, and elevate this wonderful monument of their existence.

"The reefs which raise themselves above the level of the sea are usually of a circular or oval form, and surrounded by a deep and oftentimes unfathomable ocean. In the centre of each there is generally a shallow lagoon, with still water, where the smaller and more delicate kinds of zoophytes find a tranquil abode, where the stronger species live on the outer margin of the isle, where the surf dashes on them. When the reef is dry at low water, the coral animals cease to increase. A continuous mass of solid stone is then seen, which is composed of shells and echini with fragments of corals, united by calcareous sand, produced by the pulverisation of the shells of friable polyparia. Fragments of coral limestone are thrown up by the waves, these are cracked by the heat of the sun,

washed to pieces by the surge, and drifted on the reef. After this the calcareous mass is undisturbed, and offers to the seeds of the creva, pandanas, and other trees and plants, floated thither by the waves, a soil on which they rapidly grow, and overshadow the white dazzling surface. Trunks of trees, drifted by currents from other countries, find here at length a resting-place, and bring with them some small animals, as lizard, and insects. Even before the trees form groves or forests, sea-birds nestle there ; strayed land birds find refuge in the bushes ; and at a still later period, man takes possession of the newly-created country. It is in this manner that the Polynesian Archipelago has been formed. The immediate foundations of the islands are ancient coral reefs, and these in all probability are based on the cones or craters of submarine volcanoes long since extinct."

On the south-west coast of Malabar there is a chain of reefs and islets 480 miles in length. On the east coast of New Holland an unbroken reef of 350 miles long ; between that and New Guinea a coral formation that extends upwards of 700 miles. How vast ! how wonderful !

There is so much of the marvellous and sublime in the idea of the creation of islands and continents by the ceaseless labors of numberless myriads of living instruments, that we cannot be surprised that this subject has attracted the attention of one of the most elegant of our modern poets. The following beautiful extract is from the "Pelican Island" of James Montgomery :—

"I saw the living pile ascend ;
The mausoleum of its architects,
Still dying upwards as their labors closed ;
Slime the materials, but the slime was turned
To adamant by their petrific touch.
Frail were their frames, ephemeral their lives,
Their masonry imperishable. All
Life's needful functions, food, exertion, rest,
By nice economy of Providence,
Were overruled to carry on the process,
Which out of water brought forth solid rock.
Atom by atom, thus the mountain grew
A coral island, stretching east and west ;
Steep were the flanks, with precipices sharp,
Descending to their base in ocean gloom.