15. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE POLYPARIA.—I will first consider the geographical distribution of these singular beings; in the next place, describe a few of the principal varieties; and lastly, review the important physical changes effected by creatures so minute, and apparently so incompetent to produce any material alteration in the earth's surface.

The greater number of the corals or polyparia are inhabitants of the ocean; many species prefer the immediate influence of atmospheric changes, and are seen on the rocks and plants which the tide leaves bare, sometimes in such profusion that the whole surface appears one animated mass. At the period of the great equinoctial tides, when the sea retires from the rocks which it has overflowed for many preceding months, the polyparia, when the waters first recede, are full of vigour, but languish as they lose their moisture, and perish if they remain long uncovered by the sea.

Some kinds are situated on the southern slope of the rocks; others, on the contrary, are attached to the opposite aspect, and never to the former. The larger polyparia are rarely found in places exposed to violent currents; it is in the hollows of rocks, in submarine grottoes, in the shelter of large and solid masses, that these species attach themselves. Many appear fitted to enjoy the powerful action of the surges, the pliant branches bending to the movements of the waters, and