

## THE STORY OF CORAL

AMONG the greatest architects in the world are the little coral-making animals, creatures of warm, shallow waters of the Philippines and many other places. Small as are these tiny workmen, each does its work until speck by speck a new land is created.

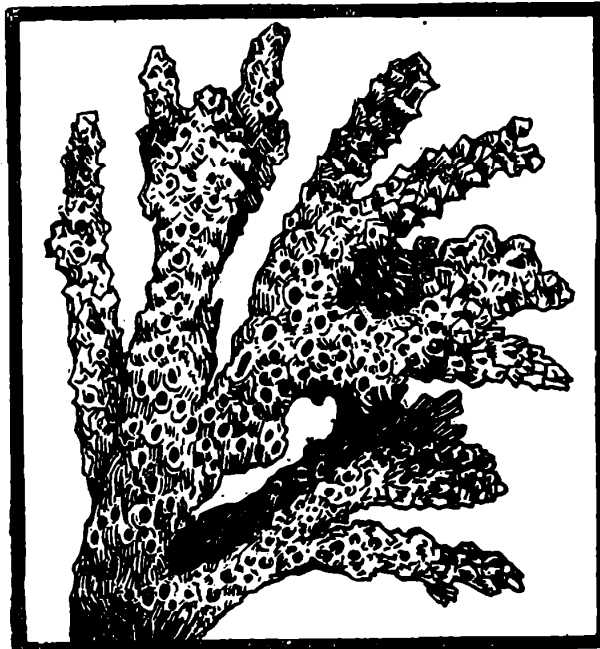
The parent coral animal originates as an egg, and begins life as a free swimming little creature, but after a time it settles down as a polyp on a rock or a piece of dead coral and begins to live like a plant, having lost its power of moving from place to place. Indeed, for a long time corals were thought to be sea flowers.

As a coral develops, little feelers like petals begin to appear about the mouth. Day by day, stretching out these arms, the polyp catches and feeds upon the tiny organisms floating in the sea, and builds a solid skeleton with secretions of lime.

Most of the kinds of corals continue to live in vast colonies of many thousands of polyps so closely connected that you cannot see where one individual leaves off and another begins. The parent polyp produces little buds which develop feelers and stomachs of their own, and these in turn produce new buds—all remaining joined together into one great family, sometimes living for hundreds of years.

Year by year coral skeletons accumulate, cementing together in one mass, until after centuries new land is formed consisting of the skeletons of billions of dead polyps.

Coral reefs and islands are most numerous in the warmer portions of the Pacific and the Indian ocean. There are many coral islands and reefs in these waters.



Coral is composed chiefly of carbonate of lime. Beyond their value as sources of lime, few corals present any special feature of industrial importance, except the red or precious coral of the Mediterranean sea. This species has been, from remote times, very highly prized for jewelry and for decorative purposes.

At the beginning of the Christian era a great trade was carried on in coral between the Mediterranean and India, where it was greatly esteemed as a substance endowed with mysterious sacred properties.

Among the Romans branches of coral were hung around children's necks to preserve them from danger, and the substance had many medicinal virtues attributed to it.

In the Philippines coral of several varieties is abundant. It is used in the islands for supplying lime, and in some sections for making roads.