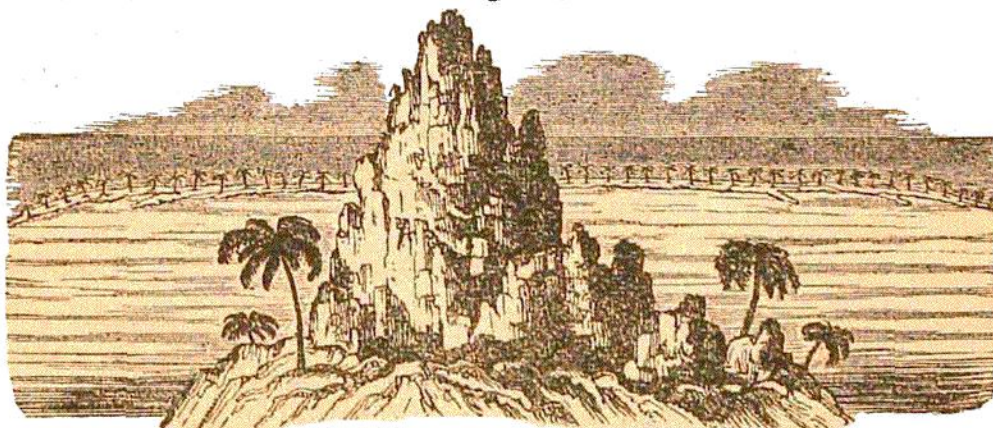


far above the waters and sometimes covers one reef with lava, which in its turn is covered with another formation of coral. The growth of coral structures is so extremely slow that centuries are required to produce any important progress. The rate of increase is about half an inch per annum.

The diameter of the circular reefs has been found to vary from less than one to thirty miles. On the outside, the reef is usually very precipitous, and the water often of unfathomable depth. Fig. 115 is a view of one of these circular islands in the South Seas, called Whitsunday Isle; so far reclaimed from the waters as to be covered with cocoanut trees and with some human dwellings. Fig. 116 represents another of the coral islands in the Pacific Ocean.

Fig. 116.



*View of the Island of Bolabola.*

These islets occur abundantly in the Pacific Ocean, between the thirtieth parallels of latitude. They abound also in the Indian Ocean, in the Arabian and Persian Gulfs, in the West Indies, etc. Usually they are scattered in a linear manner over a great extent. Thus, on the eastern coast of New Holland, is a reef 350 miles long. Disappointment Islands and Duff's Group are connected by 500 miles of coral reefs, over which the natives can travel from one island to another. Between New Holland and New Guinea is a line of reefs 700 miles long, interrupted in no place by channels more than thirty miles wide. A chain of coral islets, 480 geographical miles long, has long been known by the name of the Maldivas. Some groups in the Pacific, as the Dangerous Archipelago, are from 1,100 to 1,200 miles long, and from 300 to 400 miles broad.

*Deposits of the Skeletons of Infusoria, and Microscopic Plants.*—It is surprising that skeletons of animals and plants, made of silica and iron, requiring thousands of millions to form a single cubic inch, should yet form deposits of considerable extent. At Egea, in Bohemia, there is a stratum two miles long and twenty-eight feet in thickness, mostly composed of shells of infusoria.