

and was not extricated without some difficulty. It looked like a dirty brownish clay. This mud is nothing but comminuted coral, so fine as to be almost impalpable.

The *lagoons* of the smaller islands are usually very shallow; and in some, merely a dry bed remains, indicating the former existence of water. Instances of the latter kind are met with only in islands less than three miles in diameter; and those with shallow lagoons are seldom much larger. These shallow waters, when direct communication with the sea is cut off, become, in some instances, very salt by evaporation, and contain no growing coral, with few signs of life of any kind; and in other cases, they are made too fresh for marine life through the rains. At Enderbury's Island the water was not only extremely saline, but the shores of the lagoon were in some places incrustated with salt. But when there is an open channel, or the tides gain access over a bare reef, corals continue to grow, and a considerable portion of the lagoon may be obstructed by them. At Henuake, the sea is shut out except at high water, and there were consequently but few species of corals, and those of small size. At Ahii (Peacock's Island), there was a small entrance to the lagoon, and though comparatively shallow, corals were growing over a large part of it.

In the larger islands, the lagoons contain but small reefs compared with their whole extent; the greater part is an open sea, with deep waters and a sandy or muddy bottom. There are instances, as at the southern Maldives, of a depth of fifty and sixty fathoms. From twenty to thirty-five fathoms is the usual depth in the Paumotus. This was the result of Captain Beechey's investigations; and those of the Expedition, though few, correspond. It is however probable that deeper soundings would be found in the large island of Nairsa (Dean's). In Gilbert's Group, south-east of the Carolines, the depth, where examined by the Expedition, varied from two to thirty-five fathoms. Mr. Darwin found the latter depth at Keeling's Island. Chamisso found twenty-five to thirty-five fathoms at the Marshall Islands.