

most, is forty-four miles long from north to south, and thirty-four miles across.

The point of special interest in their structure is the occurrence of atolls or annular reefs within the larger atolls. The islets of the lagoon and those of the incircling reef are in many instances annular reefs, each with its own little lake. Gems within gems are here clustered together.

This feature is well exhibited in the Mahlos Mahdoo atoll, an enlarged map of which, from Darwin's work, is inserted on the preceding page. The atoll consists of three main atoll-shaped portions ; but in each of these, the border is made up in part of atolls. Many of the subordinate atolls of the border are "three, and some even five miles in diameter, while those within the lagoon are usually smaller, few being more than two miles across, and the greater number less than one. The depth of the little lagoons within these small annular reefs is generally from five to seven fathoms, but occasionally more ; and in Ari atoll, many of the central ones are twelve, and some even more than twelve fathoms deep. These subordinate atolls rise abruptly from the platform or bank on which they stand, with their outer margin bordered by living corals." "The small atolls of the border, even where most perfect and standing farthest apart, generally have their longest axis directed in the line which the reef would have held if the atoll had been bounded by an ordinary wall." (Darwin on Coral Reefs, pp. 33, 34.)

The Maldives are among the largest atoll-reefs known ; and they are intersected by many large open channels ; and Mr. Darwin observes, that the interior atolls occur only near these channels, where the sea has free access. We may view each large island in the archipelago as a sub-archipelago of itself. Although thus singular in their features, they illustrate no new principles with regard to reef-formations.

Mr. Darwin thus remarks (*op. cit. pp. 33, 34*),—"I can in fact point out no essential difference between these little ring-formed reefs (which, however, are larger, and contain deeper lagoons than many true atolls that stand in the open sea), and the most perfectly characterized atolls, excepting