

Florida reefs and the opposite shores or reefs along the Bahamas and Cuba, called the Straits of Florida. A few paragraphs on these straits by Mr. de Pourtales are cited from his memoir referred to on page 167. The places described will be found on the map at the close of this volume.

“In transverse sections of the channel, the greatest depth is nearest its southern or eastern shore, and in a longitudinal section the depth diminishes in passing toward the north, finding its minimum in the narrowest part between Cape Florida and the Bemini Islands, after which it increases again. In a transverse section between Key West and Havana, the greatest depth is 853 fathoms; between Sombrero Light and Elbow or Double-Headed Shot Key, on the Salt Key Bank, 500 fathoms; between Carysfort reef and Orange Key, on the Great Bahama Bank, 475 fathoms; and between Cape Florida and the Bemini Islands, 370 fathoms. In following a cross section from the emerged coral reef called the Florida Keys, the so-called Hawk Channel is first crossed, limited outside by the living coral reef. Its greatest depth is seldom more than six or seven fathoms, generally much less toward its northern extremity; it is often interrupted by shoals, and so-called heads of live coral, and its bottom consists of calcareous mud from decomposed corals and corallines. Next comes the reef, rising nearly to low-water mark, but by no means continuous. It extends from Cape Florida, south and west, to a short distance from beyond Key West, and seems to be slowly increasing in that direction.

“Although the deep blue colour of the water after passing the reef seems to indicate a very abrupt slope, there is in no part of it anything to compare with the sudden deepening on the edge of the coral reefs of the Pacific Ocean, or even of the Bahamas or the coast of Cuba. The distance from the reef to the 100-fathom line is not less than three miles, and often as much as six. In this space the bottom consists of calcareous mud, and is not particularly rich in animal life. From ninety or a hundred fathoms to two hundred and fifty or three hundred, the bottom slopes rather gently in the