

face from the section (Fig. 184). They rise with sometimes

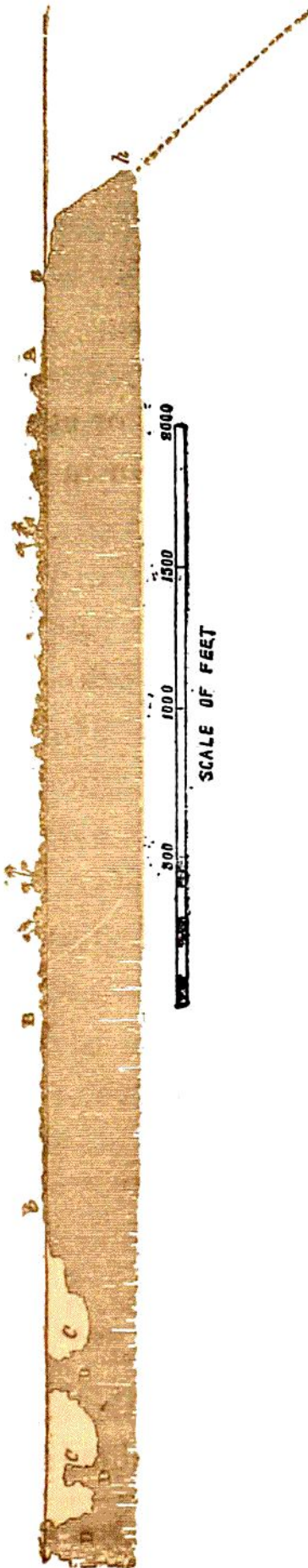


Fig. 184.—Section of a Coral-Reef.

A B, Portion above tide-mark (*a b*), covered with vegetation and habitable; C C, edge of lagoon, with insular masses of coral (D D); the open ocean lies to the right of the slope *a h*.

tolerably steep slopes from a depth of 2000 feet and upward, until they reach the surface of the sea. But as the coral polyps do not live at a greater depth than about 15 or 20 fathoms, and could not have grown upward therefore from the bottom of a deep sea, Darwin inferred that the sites of these coral-reefs had undergone a progressive subsidence, the rate of their upward growth keeping pace, on the whole, with that of their depression. On this view, what is termed a *Fringing Reef* (A B, Fig. 185) would first be formed fronting the land (L) between the limit of the 20-fathom line and the sea-level (s s). Growing upward until it reached the surface of the water, it would be exposed to the dash of the waves, which would break off pieces of the coral and heap them upon the reef. In this way islets would be formed upon it, which, by successive accumulations of materials thrown up by the breakers or brought by winds, would