

each end of their poles. I told my guides to provide themselves with food and clothing; but they said that there was plenty of food in the mountains, and for clothing, that their skins were sufficient. Our line of march was the valley of Tia-auru, down which a river flows into the sea by Point Venus. This is one of the principal streams in the island, and its source lies at the base of the loftiest central pinnacles, which rise to a height of about 7,000 feet. The whole island is so mountainous that the only way to penetrate into the interior is to follow up the valleys. Our road, at first, lay through woods which bordered each side of the river; and the glimpses of the lofty central peaks, seen as through an avenue, with here and there a waving cocoanut tree on one side, were extremely picturesque. The valley soon began to narrow, and the sides to grow lofty and more precipitous. After having walked between three and four hours, we found the width of the ravine scarcely exceeded that of the bed of the stream. On each hand the walls were nearly vertical; yet, from the soft nature of the volcanic strata, trees and a rank vegetation sprung from every projecting ledge. These precipices must have been some thousand feet high; and the whole formed a mountain gorge far more magnificent than anything which I had ever before beheld. Until the midday sun stood vertically over the ravine, the air felt cool and damp, but now it became very sultry. Shaded by a ledge of rock, beneath a façade of columnar lava, we ate our dinner. My guides had already procured a dish of small fish and fresh-water prawns. They carried with them a small net stretched on a hoop; and where the water was deep and in eddies, they dived, and, like otters, with their eyes open, followed the fish into holes and corners, and thus caught them.

The Tahitians have the dexterity of amphibious animals in the water. An anecdote mentioned by Ellis shows how much they feel at home in this element. When a horse was landing for Pomarre in 1817, the slings broke, and it fell into the water: immediately the natives jumped overboard, and