

broad flat of coral-rock served to break the violence of the open sea. Excepting near the lagoon, where there is some sand, the land is entirely composed of rounded fragments of coral. In such a loose, dry, stony soil, the climate of the intertropical regions alone could produce a vigorous vegetation. On some of the smaller islets nothing could be more elegant than the manner in which the young and full-grown cocoanut trees, without destroying each other's symmetry, were mingled into one wood. A beach of glittering white sand formed a border to these fairy spots.

I will now give a sketch of the natural history of these islands, which, from its very paucity, possesses a peculiar interest. The cocoanut tree, at the first glance, seems to compose the whole wood; there are, however, five or six other trees. One of these grows to a very large size, but, from the extreme softness of its wood, is useless; another sort affords excellent timber for ship-building. Besides the trees, the number of plants is exceedingly limited, and consists of insignificant weeds. In my collection, which includes, I believe, nearly the perfect Flora, there are twenty species, without reckoning a moss, lichen, and fungus. To this number two trees must be added; one of which was not in flower, and the other I only heard of. The latter is a solitary tree of its kind, and grows near the beach, where, without doubt, the one seed was thrown up by the waves. A *Guilandina* also grows on only one of the islets. I do not include in the above list the sugar-cane, banana, some other vegetables, fruit-trees, and imported grasses. As the islands consist entirely of coral, and at one time must have existed as mere water-washed reefs, all their terrestrial productions must have been transported here by the waves of the sea. In accordance with this, the Florula has quite the character of a refuge for the destitute: Professor Henslow informs me that of the twenty species nineteen belong to different genera, and these again to no less than sixteen families!¹

¹ These plants are described in the *Annals of Nat. Hist.*, vol. i., 1838, p. 337.