

beneath the coral sand. It is about ten or twelve feet wide. The coral-sand beach above the compact layer has eight feet perpendicular rise, and lies at an angle of 47° . On the top of this are small pieces of coral, which have been thrown up by the sea, around the roots of trees and shrubs, growing to the height of from fifteen to twenty feet. We found the water in the lagoon quite salt, and very warm. Its bottom for a long distance was filled with a fine deposit of calcareous mud, about six inches in depth. The water had apparently evaporated from the lagoon, and to the taste was much saltier than the ocean. Purslane (*Portulaca*) was found growing in a thrifty state in this deposit. Where the lagoon was deeper, some fine specimens of corals were observed and obtained. No traces of inhabitants were perceived on this island. The state of nature in which the birds were found, and other indications, gave proof that it had not been inhabited, at least for some time. There were a great many sharks, both in the lagoon and outside, which were so ravenous that they bit at the oars. It was by no means pleasant to have to swim through the surf to the boat with these dangerous animals so numerous around us.

The landing on a coral island effectually does away with all preconceived notions of its beauty, and any previous ideas formed in its favour are immediately put to flight. That verdure which seemed from a distant view to carpet the whole island, was in reality but a few patches of wiry grass, obstructing the walking, and offering neither fruit nor flowers to view; it grew among the rugged coral debris, with a little sand and vegetable earth.

The principal trees and shrubs are the *Pandanus*, *Boerhaavia*, and *Pisonia*. It is somewhat surprising that a few trees forty or fifty feet high should have found sufficient soil to protect their growth. Most of the trees, however, are of stunted size, being not more than ten to fifteen feet in height, and eighteen inches in diameter.

Van Schouten and Le Maire visited this island, 10th April, 1616, some two hundred years before, and it was even then clothed with vegetation. If their description is an accurate one, the island appears now to be rather higher, as they report "from what they could judge, the greater part of the island is overflowed at high water;" this is certainly not the case now. The centre of the island is in latitude $14^{\circ} 55' 40''$ S., longitude $138^{\circ} 47' 36''$ W.

The number of birds on the island was incredible, and they were so tame as to require to be pushed off their nests to get their eggs. The most conspicuous among them was the frigate-bird (*Tachypetis aquilus*); many of the trees were covered with their nests, constructed of a few sticks. The old birds were seen, as they flew off, inflating