

sometimes there is an opening, admitting a boat or canoe, in the reef, but I never saw or heard of an opening that would admit a ship.

The reef, or the first origin of these isles, is formed by the animalcules inhabiting the lithophytes. They raise their habitation within a little of the surface of the sea, which gradually throws shells, weeds, sand, small bits of corals, and other things, on the tops of these coral rocks, and at last fairly raises them above water; where the above things continue to be accumulated by the sea, till by a bird, or by the sea, a few seeds of plants that commonly grow on the sea-shore, are thrown up, and begin to vegetate; and by their annual decay and reproduction from seeds, create a little mould, yearly accumulated by the mixture with sand, increasing the dry spot on every side; till another sea happens to carry a cocoa-nut hither, which preserves its vegetative power a long time in the sea, and therefore will soon begin to grow on this soil; especially as it thrives equally in all kinds of soil; and thus may all these low isles have become covered with the finest cocoa-nut trees.

The animalcules forming these reefs want to shelter their habitation from the impetuosity of the winds, and the power and rage of the ocean; but as, within the tropics, the winds blow commonly from one quarter, they, by instinct, endeavour to stretch only a ledge, within which is a lagoon, which is certainly entirely screened against the power of both. This, therefore, might account for the method employed by the animalcules in building only narrow ledges of coral rocks, to secure in their middle a calm and sheltered place; and this seems to me to be the most probable cause of the origin of all the Tropical Low Isles, over the whole South Sea.