

which, at first, seem most weak and inefficient. It is not that the ocean spares the rock of coral; the great fragments scattered over the reef, and heaped on the beach, whence the tall cocoanut springs, plainly bespeak the unrelenting power of the waves. Nor are any periods of repose granted. The long swell caused by the gentle but steady action of the trade wind, always blowing in one direction over a wide area, causes breakers, almost equalling in force those during a gale of wind in the temperate regions, and which never cease to rage. It is impossible to behold these waves without feeling a conviction that an island, though built of the hardest rock, let it be porphyry, granite or quartz, would ultimately yield and be demolished by such an irresistible power. Yet these low, insignificant coral-islets stand and are victorious: for here another power, as an antagonist, takes part in the contest. The organic forces separate the atoms of carbonate of lime, one by one, from the foaming breakers, and unite them into a symmetrical structure. Let the hurricane tear up its thousand huge fragments; yet what will that tell against the accumulated labor of myriads of architects at work night and day, month after month? Thus do we see the soft and gelatinous body of a polypus, through the agency of the vital laws, conquering the great mechanical power of the waves of an ocean which neither the art of man nor the inanimate works of nature could successfully resist.

We did not return on board till late in the evening, for we stayed a long time in the lagoon, examining the fields of coral and the gigantic shells of the chama, into which, if a man were to put his hand, he would not, as long as the animal lived, be able to withdraw it. Near the head of the lagoon, I was much surprised to find a wide area, considerably more than a mile square, covered with a forest of delicately branching corals, which, though standing upright, were all dead and rotten. At first I was quite at a loss to understand the cause; afterward it occurred to me that it was owing to the following rather curious combination of