

There is also to be found about inner reefs, over large areas, the solid white limestone already described, showing internally no evidence of its coral origin, and containing rarely a shell or other imbedded fossil. It is a result of the consolidation of the fine coral sand or mud that is made and accumulated through the action of the light waves that work over the inner reefs. It has been said that large regions of barren sands or mud occur among the patches of growing corals, and these would give origin to this compact limestone.

The formation of the inner reefs goes on at a less rapid rate than that of the outer, because the process depends on the growth of the corals with comparatively little aid from the action of the waves. Moreover, as is explained more particularly in another place, impure or fresh waters and currents often operate to destroy the living corals, or retard their progress.

Owing to the last-mentioned cause, the inner reefs are not usually joined directly to the beach. They stand off a little, separated by an interval of shallow water. At Mathuata, in the Feejees, however, the reef extends quite up; and it is the more remarkable as the coast is flat, the site of a Feejee village, and a mile or two back stands a high bluff. On an island off this part of Vanua Lebu there is another example of this fact, and many more might be cited. In such cases, however, there is evidence that the shores upon which the corals grew were bare rocks, instead of moving beach-sands.

From these descriptions it appears that the main distinction between the inner and outer reefs consists in the less fragmentary character of the rock in the former case, the less frequent accumulations of debris on their upper surface, and the more varied features and slopes of the margin. Moreover, the Nullipores, which seem to flourish best in the breakers, are here but sparingly met with.

The variety of coral zoophytes is also greater in the stiller water, and there are species peculiar to the different regions.