

silt they were bearing off, and thus secure its addition to the land. They prevent, therefore, the waste which is constantly going on about islands without such barriers ; for the ocean not only encroaches upon the unprotected shores of small islands, but carries off much of whatever the streams empty into it. The delta of Rewa, on Viti Lebu, resulting from the detritus accumulations of a large river, covers nearly sixty square miles. This is an extreme case in the Pacific, as few islands are so large, and consequently rivers of such magnitude are not common. But there is rarely a coral-girt island which has not at least some narrow plains from this source ; and upon them the villages of the natives are usually situated. Around Tahiti these plains are from half a mile to two or three miles in width, and the cocoa-nut and bread-fruit groves are mostly confined to them.

The reefs also provide extensive fishing-grounds for the natives, and afford abundant fish, their main reliance in the way of animal food. They also supply large interior waters for practice in navigation and for safe communication between distant settlements. And the effect is evident in the spirit of maritime enterprise which characterises the islanders ; for these circumstances have favoured the construction of large sail-canoes in which they venture beyond their own land, and often undertake voyages hundreds of miles in length. Communication between the Friendly Islanders and the Feejees has long been kept up by means of these large rudely-rigged sail-canoes.

Instead of a rock-bound coast, harbourless and thinly habitable, like St. Helena, in the tropics, and nearly all extra-tropical islands, the shores of these reef-bound lands are blooming to the very edge, and wide plains are spread out with bread-fruit and other tropical productions. Harbours, safe for scores of vessels, are also opened by the same means ; and some islands number a dozen, when the unprotected shores would hardly have afforded a single good anchorage. Jukes remarks that the sea within the great Australian barrier is "one great natural harbour ;" and this harbour is as long as from the extremity of Florida to Newfoundland.