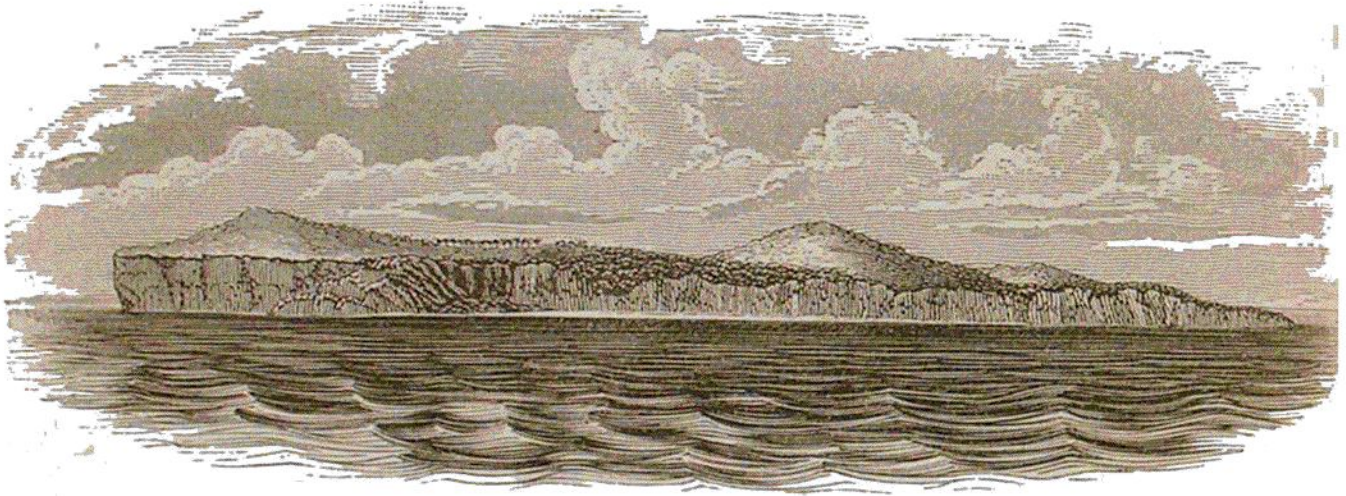


The cliff, though vertical in some parts, is roughly sloping in others, and on the west side the surface of the island gradually declines to the sea.

The rock is a white and solid limestone, seldom presenting any traces of its coral origin. In some few layers there were disseminated corals, looking like imbedded fossils, along with beautiful casts of shells; but for the most part it was as compact as any ancient limestone, and as uniform in texture. Occasionally there were disseminated spots of crystallized calcite.

The caverns contain coarse stalactites, some of which are six feet in diameter; and interesting specimens were obtained



METIA, OR AURORA ISLAND.

containing recent land shells that had been inclosed by a calcareous film while hibernating.

It is probable that more extensive caverns would have been found had there been more than a few hours for the examination of the island. The Rev. Mr. Williams, in his work on *Missionary Enterprises in the Pacific*, gives very interesting descriptions of caverns in the *elevated* coral rock of Atiu, one of the Hervey Group. In one, he wandered two hours, without finding a termination to its windings, passing through chambers with "fretwork ceilings of stalagmite and stalactite columns, which, 'mid the darkness, sparkled brilliantly with the reflected torch-light." This author remarks, "that while the madrepores, the brain and every other species of coral are full of little cells, these islands (including those resembling Atiu),