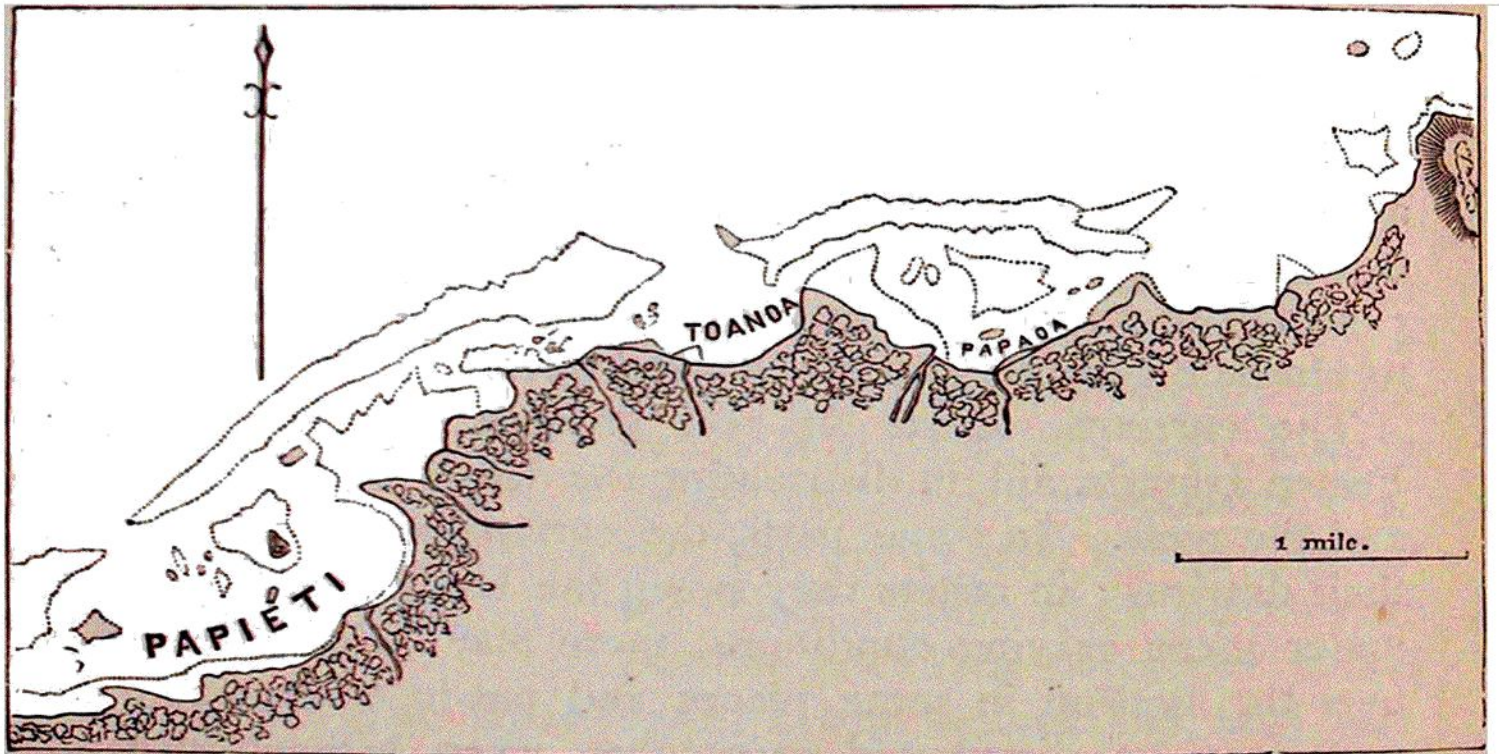


marine currents in keeping the bottom clear of growing coral. These are the principal means by which fresh-water streams contribute toward determining the existence of harbours; for little is due to their freshening the salt waters of the sea.

The small influence of the last-mentioned cause—the one most commonly appealed to—will be obvious, when we consider the size of the streams of the Pacific islands, and the fact that fresh water is lighter than salt, and therefore, instead of sinking, flows on over its surface. The deepest rivers are seldom over six feet, even at their mouths; and three or



PART OF THE NORTH SHORE OF TAHITI.

four feet is a more usual depth. They will have little effect, therefore, on the sea water beneath this depth, for they cannot sink below it; and corals may consequently grow even in front of a river's mouth. Moreover the river water becomes mingled with the salt, and, in most cases, a short distance out, would not be unfit for some species of coral zoöphytes.

Fresh-water streams, acting in all the different modes pointed out, are of little importance in harbour-making about the islands of the Pacific. The harbours, with scarcely an exception, would have existed without them. They tend, however,