

no doubt from the rivers and shores of that sea. He remarks that the characteristic blueness of the Mediterranean, like that of the Lake of Geneva, may be due to the diffusion of exceedingly minute sedimentary particles through the water.

The great oceanic currents are probably powerful agents in the transport of fine detritus and of living and dead organisms. Coral-reefs appear to flourish best where these currents bring a continuous and abundant supply of food to the reef-builders. The reefs, in turn, furnish an enormous quantity of fine silt, produced by the pounding action of breakers upon them. Before the silt can sink to the bottom, it may be transported to vast distances. The lower portion of the Gulf Stream, from its exit in the Florida Channel northward to Cape Hatteras, a distance of 700 miles, has been compared to a huge muddy river, carrying its silt to the steep slope south of that cape, and depositing here and there patches of green sand along the sides of its course, while the upper waters remain perfectly clear and of the deepest blue. The silt is partly derived from the abrasion of coral-reefs, partly from the decay of the abundant pelagic fauna swept onward by the current. Prof. A. Agassiz has recently called attention to the important part which the great oceanic currents, in ancient as in modern times, may have played in the accumulation of limestones, not only by transporting calcareous organisms, but by bringing an abundant food-supply and thereby nourishing a prolific fauna along their track.²⁶⁹

During the voyage of the "Challenger," from the abysses of the Pacific Ocean, at remote distances from land, the dredge brought up bushels of rounded pieces of pumice of

²⁶⁹ Amer. Acad. xi. 1882, p. 126.