

The western part of New Britain is thus described by M. D'Urville, who visited it in 1827 :—

"Rarely has nature imprinted so delicious an aspect on a country untouched by the hand of man, with such an agreeable diversity of surface and beautiful effects of perspective. The coast throughout quite safe, accessible, and washed by tranquil waves; the land gently rising in the form of an amphitheatre in various places, here and there shaded by dark forests; or by less thick vegetation and more particularly by extensive tracts of greensward, the yellowish tints of which contrasted richly with the darker shades of the more sombre forests and woods surrounding them. The two peaks of Mount Gloucester crowned this smiling scene with their imposing masses, their majestic summits frequently hidden in the clouds. In all the western quarter, and at twelve miles distance, our horizon was occupied by the undulating lines of Rook Island, which, with New Britain, forms the Strait of Dampier."

ADMIRALTY ISLANDS.

The largest of this group is Admiralty Island, the centre of which is in lat. $2^{\circ} 18' S.$, long. $146^{\circ} 44' E.$ Some of the islands of this group are described as being thickly populated by an apparently happy and contented people. They appear to live principally on cocoa-nuts, which are abundant on the islands.

TORÉLAU OR UNION GROUP, ELLICE GROUP, and GILBERT OR KINGSMILL GROUP.

These islands are thus described by the Rev. J. S. Whitmee, of the London Missionary Society, who visited them in the missionary barque "John Williams" in 1870 :—

"*Tokelau or Union Group*.—This group consists of three clusters of islets, named respectively Fakaofu, Nukunono, and Atafu. The islets of each cluster are connected by a reef, forming one of the numerous atolls to be found in the Pacific. These reefs are more or less circular in form, enclosing a lagoon in the centre. The land is formed on the raised reef by the washing of sand and broken coral from the sea during rough weather. In some of the older atolls the land is connected and forms a continuous ring around the lagoon; but more commonly land exists only here and there along the reef, thus forming a ring of islands, some from one mile to six miles in length, covered with cocoa-nut palms and other trees, and some only a few yards across, upon which two or three stunted cocoa-nuts barely manage to exist, while others again are mere sandbanks destitute of all vegetable life.

"*Takaofu* (Bowditch Island), lat. $9^{\circ} 26' S.$, long. $171^{\circ} 12' W.$, the most easterly in the group, consists of more than twenty small islands, encircling a lagoon eight miles long by five miles wide. All the islands are very barren, yielding little except cocoa-nuts, palms, and a species of edible pandanus. Upon these and fish, which are plentiful, the people entirely subsist, and they appear to thrive very well upon them. The population of the island is only 223 at the present time, and more than two-thirds of the adults are females.

"*Atafu* (Duke of York Island), in lat. $8^{\circ} 33' S.$, and long. $172^{\circ} 25' W.$ This atoll is of similar formation to Takaofu, but the lagoon is smaller. The islands studding the annular reef are about twenty in number, and consist of sand and broken coral washed up by the action of the waves, without the slightest trace of soil. Here I had a peep into the secret of island formation. As I was walking on one side of the island on which the village is situated I noticed a series of sandy mounds running parallel with the coast, and varying from ten to fifty feet in breadth. Some had cocoa-nut palms and pandanus already growing on them and producing fruit; on others the vegetation was of a more recent growth, while others were bare, or with only a few of the pandanus fruit, which had by some accident been cast upon them, sprouting and giving promise for the future. The outer mound was fully fifty feet across it, and had been washed up during heavy weather at the beginning of the present year. The population of the island is 136, it having been greatly diminished by Peruvian slavers.

"*Ellice Group*.—Nukulaelae (Mitchell Island or Group). It lies in lat. $9^{\circ} 18' S.$, and long. $179^{\circ} 48' E.$ There are several small islands encircling this lagoon, on one of the largest of which is the village. The population is very small, only ninety at the present time. This is the place where the Peruvian slavers made the greatest havoc in 1863.

"*Funafuti* (Ellice Island).—We reached this atoll the day after leaving Nukulaelae. Its position is in lat. $8^{\circ} 29' S.$, and long. $179^{\circ} 21' E.$ The lagoon is twelve miles or more in one direction by five or six miles in the other. In two places there is a sufficient depth of water over the reef to allow vessels to go inside the lagoon. Captain Fowler took the vessel inside and anchored. The island presents an appearance very similar to the others we had visited. Some of them were evidently older than any we had hitherto seen, except Quiros Island. The island on which the village stands could boast of a nearer approach to a legitimate soil; consequently more variety of food is produced. Besides the cocoa-nut palm, which is almost sure to be found wherever a sandbank raises its head above low water-mark, and the pandanus, we found here a few bread-fruit trees and bananas, with two species of the edible arum or taro. One of these grows to an immense size; and although to our palates it appeared to be quantity without quality, it doubtless is an acceptable addition to the alimentary stores of those whose daily fare is chiefly confined to cocoa-nuts, pandanus, fruit, and fish. The way the people cultivate the taro, bananas, &c., in these islands is worthy of a brief notice in passing. They dig large trenches, like wide moats, along the centre of the islands. Some of these are from 100 to 200 yards across them, and from six to eight feet deep. To carry out the sand from these trenches must have been the work of generations. These low levels are moist, and on them they make as much soil as possible by throwing in decayed wood and leaves, and here they plant everything which requires special care. Nothing edible but the cocoa-nut and the pandanus grows on the upper sand. We brought two cases of useful plants from Samoa, and distributed them amongst the islands we visited, in order to add to the temporal as well as the spiritual well-being of the people. These were very gladly received.

"*Vaitupu* (Tracy Island), lat. $7^{\circ} 31' S.$, long. $178^{\circ} 46' E.$ We reached this island the morning after we left Funafuti, Oct. 7. It is nearly round, about four miles across, and has a salt-water lagoon in the centre, completely shut off from the sea by a ring-like strip of land about half a mile across. The island is evidently older than some of the others we have visited, and is more productive. Cocoa-nut palms are very abundant, and very productive. There is also a good supply of taro, and there are