

group, lie near the western limits of the archipelago. The former is ninety-four statute miles long and fifty-five broad, and the latter is one hundred and five miles long by twenty-five in average breadth. To the westward of these islands, a large area is covered with patches of reefs, extending twenty miles from Viti Lebu, towards the Asaua Group, and ten to fifteen miles west and north of Vanua Lebu. Through this immense coral garden—an epithet it well merits—covering an area of one thousand square miles, the waters in the channels among the reefs and beds of coral have an average depth of twelve or fourteen fathoms, seldom falling below nine, and as rarely exceeding twenty fathoms. There is, however, a deep unfathomed passage in this area, which separates the reefs of Viti Lebu from those of Vanua Lebu. The other islands of the archipelago, lying to the eastward of the “Great Feejee,” and the “Great Land,” as the above names signify, are comparatively small, and are generally separated by deep seas which have not been sounded. In several instances, however, adjoining islands even where distant are girt by the same coral reef.

A general idea of the features of these islands may perhaps be best conveyed by supposing some large tract of land crowdedly embossed with mountains, to sink, till here and there a peak, or a ridge, or collections of ridges, stand out of water.

The islands present nearly all the varieties of form which basaltic rocks are capable of assuming. Rugged ridges with bluff escarpments running up into needle peaks, characterize some portions of the group; while others are comparatively flat, and expose along the shores a cliff of basaltic columns. But, in general, the ridges have tamely rounded summits, or if irregular in outline, there is not that variety of lofty pinnacles and deep gorges which forms the principal charm of the scenery in the Tahitian Group.

The larger islands appear to the passing observer to consist of a perpetual succession of ridge and valley, and as far as we could learn by inquiry or examination, the same diversity exists through the interior, with no intervening plains of sufficient extent to require remark. But the declivities are mostly gradual, and often admit of cultivation nearly to the summit. These slopes, especially to leeward, are covered with grass eighteen or twenty inches high, which, from its dry, yellowish appearance, gives the country an arid aspect. Toward the summits, black rocks occasionally crop out or surmount the ridge like ancient ruins. Luxuriant forests also cover the ele-