

to masses. Whenever the summit of this new island can remain constantly uncovered by the sea, and the waves can no longer destroy what they themselves have contributed to form, then its extent is enlarged, and its edges are gradually raised by the successive addition of sand. According to the direction of the winds and currents they may long remain sterile; but if the seeds of vegetables be transported to them from the neighbouring shores, by the action of these two causes, then, in latitudes favourable to their development, we presently see these islands becoming covered with verdure, the successively accumulated remains of which form layers of soil, which contribute to the elevation of the surface.

But, in order that this phenomenon of growth be accomplished, the distance from land must not be too great, because then the vegetables cannot get so easily to the islets in question, which then remain almost always bare and sterile. And for this reason what navigators report of those madreporé Islands of the Great Ocean, which are covered with verdure, and are yet at a great distance from any known land, has always appeared to us extraordinary; and that so much the more, that, in those vast spaces, the violence of the waves, which nothing can break there, must disturb the operations of the zoophytes. We do not, however, deny the existence of these islands, which it would be interesting carefully to examine anew; for, whenever navigators meet with low islands between the Tropics, they do not hesitate, in compliance with the generally received opinion, to say that they consist of madreporés. Yet how many islands, which scarcely rise above the surface of the water, recognise no such origin? We may mention, as an example, the Island of Boni, si-