

mountain, hill, river, and many of the implements of their ancestors, as well as the trees and other vegetation of the land from which they are derived, are lost to them; and as words are but signs for ideas, they have fallen off in general intelligence. It would be an interesting inquiry for the philosopher, to what extent a race of men placed in such circumstances is capable of mental improvement. Perhaps the query might be best answered by another, How many of the various arts of civilized life could exist in a land where shells are the only cutting instruments,—the plants of the land in all but twenty-nine in number,—minerals but one,—quadrupeds none, with the exception of foreign rats or mice,—fresh-water barely enough for household purposes,—no streams, nor mountains, nor hills? How much of the poetry or literature of Europe would be intelligible to persons whose ideas had expanded only to the limits of a coral island; who had never conceived of a surface of land above half a mile in breadth,—of a slope higher than a beach,—of a change of seasons beyond a variation in the prevalence of rains? What elevation in morals should be expected upon a contracted islet, so readily over-peopled that threatened starvation drives to infanticide, and tends to cultivate the extremest selfishness? Assuredly, there is not a more unfavourable spot for moral or intellectual progress in the wide world than the coral island.

Still, if well supplied with foreign stores, including a good stock of ice, they might become, were they more accessible, a pleasant temporary resort for tired workers from civilized lands, who wish quiet, perpetual summer air, salt-water bathing, and boating or yachting; and especially for those who could draw inspiration from the mingled beauties of grove, lake, ocean, and coral meads and grottoes; where

“—————Life in rare and beautiful forms
Is sporting amid the bowers of stone.”

But after all, the dryland of an atoll is so limited, its features so tame, its supply of fresh water so small, and of salt water so large, that whoever should build his cottage on one of them