Wednesday Island, Torres Straits, Sept. 8th, 1874.—We left Cape York on September 8th, and made for the Prince of Wales Passage through Torres Straits. I landed at Wednesday Island, a distant outlier of Cape York, which, with Hammond Island, is passed close by in the track through the passage. The island is about two miles long, it is made up of quartz porphyry, forming hill masses, a couple of hundred feet or so in height, with sandy flats at their bases.

In places, the hill slopes come right down to the sea, forming small headlands, and here the beach is composed of boulders with small stretches of quartz sand derived from the rocks between them. Along a wider bay to the north, the whole beach is made up of calcareous sand and broken and dead shells. A shore platform reef extends all along this side of the island; in some places it is made up of consolidated coral rock, full of large masses of dead corals cemented together with coral mud, which masses are at its margin seen projecting here and there between muddy pools of water.

In other places the coral rock passes gradually into regular mud flats. There were very few living corals indeed about the shore platform; it required careful searching to find them. I found only the species of *Euphyllia*, which was at Somerset, and a small *Astræa*. One large mass of *Astræa* thrown up by the waves and embedded in the mud, had a small patch on one side of it still alive, the rest was quite dead.

Though stony corals were so scarce, soft Alcyonarians were in great abundance. The rock was full everywhere of the Giant Clam (*Tridacna*), the largest bivalve shell which has ever existed, a familiar adornment of fountains and oyster-shops in England. This mollusk lives sunk in a cavity of its own in the rock, with only its brilliant blue or green mantle fringes showing and betraying its retreat. These protruded mantle lobes have the appearance of huge expanded elongate sea anemones, and at first sight one takes them for such. The shells must be quarried out of the rock with a hammer and chisel if they are wanted.

The main peculiarity of these coral flats, as at Somerset, is their extreme muddiness and the small quantity of life about them. A Sargassum grows abundantly on the rock masses, with several other algæ. No doubt it is the decomposition of these and the soft Alcyonarians which renders the coral mud so dark and slimy. The occurrence of beaches of calcareous and siliceous sand close together, both rising from the same coral flat, is an interesting fact, as showing how easily beds of such very different materials may become associated or superposed. A large Chama shell is very abundant, cemented to