

the hard porphyry rocks, and recalled to one's mind forcibly the extinct Hippurites.

The hills of the island are covered with a scrub, nowhere very dense or high, whilst there are small mangrove swamps at the edge of the mud flats. The low sandy tracts are open, covered with scattered gum trees with long grass growing beneath them, just as at Cape York. The long grass and bushes were parched and dry, and burnt rapidly when we fired them. On the shore were an Oyster-catcher, a small Plover, and a Sandpiper, in flocks. The few Land-birds seen, were Cape York species, the common Bee-eater, little Ground Dove, *Artamus*, White Cockatoo, and a Brush Turkey.

Close to the shore were two native graves, and the remains of shelters made of branches, and of fires. The island is often visited by the natives of the Straits when on their voyages, but is not permanently inhabited. There were two graves placed side by side, consisting of oblong mounds of sand, each with six wooden posts placed regularly at the corners and middles of the longer sides. The posts had many of them large shells placed on their tops as decorations; the mounds were decorated with ribs of Dugongs, placed regularly along their sides and arching over them, whilst Dugong skulls, all without the tusks, and large shells adorned their summits.

In dredging in shallow water off Wednesday Island, a monster Starfish was obtained, apparently a species of *Oreaster*; it measured 1 ft. 9 ins. from tip to tip of its arms, and 5 inches in the height of its central disc.

Booby Island, Torres Straits, Sept. 9th, 1874.—On the following day I landed on Booby Island, which acts as a sign-post to ships entering the Prince of Wales Passage from the Arafura Sea, on the other side of Torres Straits. The island is of the same coarse quartz and felspar rock as Wednesday Island; it is only about two-thirds of a mile in circumference, and 30 to 40 feet in height. The greater part of the rock is white with the dung of sea birds, the Booby and the "Wideawake," which frequent it in vast numbers. The birds were, however, not breeding here at the time of our visit: one egg of the tern only was found. Hence these birds were shy, and left the rock on the approach of the boat, and remained flying round it until our departure.

Most astonishing is the number and variety of land-birds, which is to be found on this small island. It is so small that, when the boat party had landed and had spread over it, it became almost dangerous to shoot in any direction, for fear of hitting some one. Yet here I shot seven species of land-birds, and saw three others.