

covered with thick vegetation, whilst the leeward side was open, covered only with grass and *Pandanus* trees. It seemed uncertain whether this condition was due partly to clearing by the natives or entirely to the greater access of moisture from the trade wind on the windward side. Seemann¹ describes a similar condition, produced by aspect, as common to all the Fiji Islands. There are also, however, dense patches of wood here and there on the leeward side of the crater in Matuku, and it may be that all the grass-covered area has been cleared at some time for cultivation, the island being too small and low to vary much in atmospheric conditions. At all events the most prominent feature in the appearance of the vegetation of Matuku is the contrast of the light green open grass slopes with the dark patches of wood. The grass is high and reedy, and very tiring to force one's way through, as are also the wooded tracts; through which latter a road had to be cleared with the knife. In some places the grass had been intentionally fired by the natives as a preliminary to cultivation.

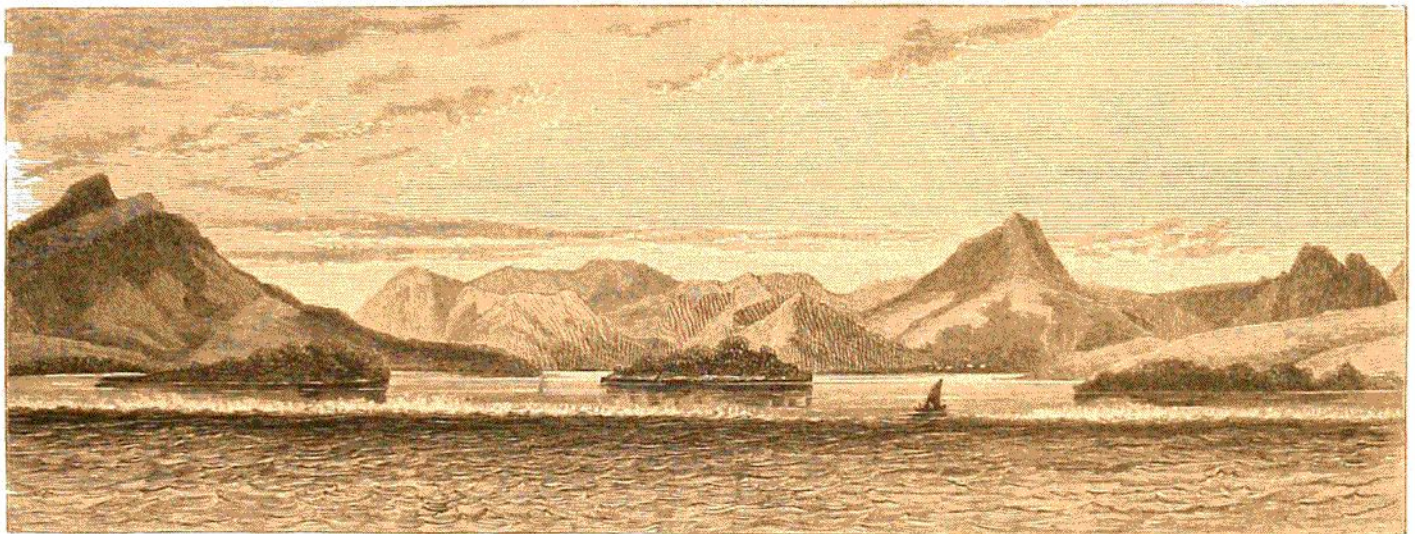


FIG. 176.—The Island of Matuku, from the entrance through the Barrier Reef.

The view from the summit of the island was most interesting as well as beautiful. The exploring party stood on what is now the highest point of the edge of the weathered crater. On the one side a steep slope led down to a narrow tract of flat land bordering the sea. This was partly open and swampy, covered with sedges and ferns, and with *Pandanus* trees dotted about over it, and partly covered with groves of coconut trees. On the other side a vertical precipice, terminating in a similar steep slope, led down into the crater itself. The cliff and internal slope of the crater were covered with thick and tangled wood, amongst which grew, even close to the summit, a few coconut palms, and one or two of the palms called "Niu Sawa" by the natives (*Kentia exorhiza*).

All round the island, except for a very short interval at the entrance to the harbour, was a circling zone of white breakers, marking the position of the barrier reef. This zone

¹ *Journ. Geogr. Soc. Lond.*, vol. xxxii. p. 52, 1862.