

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *NEW HEBRIDES. CAPE YORK. TORRES STRAITS.*

Api Island, New Hebrides. Fringing Reefs. Proofs of Elevation. Coral Living Detached. Natives of Api, their Ornaments and Weapons. Condition of Returned Labourers. Expression of the Emotions. Raine Island. Its Geological Structure. Its Vegetation. Nesting of Wideawakes. Gannets and Frigate Birds. Dead Turtles. Somerset, Cape York. Nests of White Ants. Combination of Indian and Australian Features in the Vegetation. Various Birds. Habits of the Rifle Bird. Birds Fertilizing Plants. Camp of the Blacks. Habits of these Natives. Curious Mode of Smoking. Food of the Blacks. They Cannot Count Higher than Three. Absolute Nudity of the Men. Coral Flats. Collection of Savage Weapons at Cape York. Wednesday Island, Torres Straits. Structure of Coral Flats. Giant Clam. Native Graves. Booby Island. A Halting Place for Birds during Migration. Many Land Birds on an Almost Bare Rock.

**Api Island, New Hebrides, August 18th, 1874.**—We left Kandavu on August 11th, and made a week's run before the trade wind to the island of Api, in the New Hebrides, having on board the ship some labourers, natives of that island, who had worked out their time in Fiji, and were to be returned to their home.

We were off the east coast of Api on August 18th, having passed several small adjacent islets, "Three-hill" island amongst them, all volcanic. Api lies south of Ambrym and Malicolo, and between these islands and Efate or Sandwich Island. It is in about the same latitude as the northern part of the Fiji group. The island is upwards of 20 miles long, and its highest peak is about 1,500 feet above sea-level.

The island rises in steep slopes from the sea with here and there only a stretch of flat shore land. It consists of a series of peaks and steep-sided valleys and ridges. The whole is entirely covered with the densest possible vegetation, excepting on very small spots, with difficulty discerned with a glass, where plots are cleared by the natives for cultivation.

The ship steamed close in to the island, opposite a spot where a valley terminated towards the sea with a widened mouth, evidently containing a river. There was a stretch of