

I.—The Islands  
generally:  
Mr. Seed.

*Government.*—Tahiti is nominally under the French Protectorate, which was established in 1844, but practically their power is absolute.

Papeite is the seat of Government. It stands at the foot of the highest mountain of the island. The ground here is level, but there is not much space between it and the foot of the mountains. It is covered with the richest and most beautiful vegetation.

Commodore R. A. Powell, C.B., of H.M.S. "Topaze," who visited Tahiti in 1867, in speaking of the French occupation of the Society Islands, says: "The French appear to be very liberal in their government, and the natives have only to pay a small capitation-tax, in default of which they give so many days' work. The Protestant religion is not interfered with, and the missionary schools are encouraged; order is preserved, and the only restrictions on the natives are for their own benefit. On comparing the state of this island with that of others where European influence is not felt, I am of opinion that the presence of the French at Tahiti has been very beneficial, and it is to be regretted that their settlements in the Marquesas have been abandoned, although doubtless they were expensive to keep up."

#### LOW ARCHIPELAGO OR PAUMOTU GROUP.

This vast collection of coral islands, one of the wonders of the Pacific, extends over sixteen degrees of longitude, without taking into consideration the detached islands to the S.E. of it. They are all of them of similar character, and exhibit very great sameness in their features. When they are seen at a distance, which cannot be great on account of their lowness, the aspect is one of surpassing beauty, if the dry part of the island or belt is sufficiently covered with trees; but much of this beauty is dispelled on a nearer approach, as the vegetation is usually found to be scanty and wiry.

The archipelago, like the adjoining groups of the Marquesas and the Society Islands, are under the French Protectorate. There are seventy-eight islands; eighteen are uninhabited, and sixteen are still occupied by savage tribes. These are in the south-eastern parts of the group, farthest removed from the civilizing neighbourhood of Tahiti. The western portion is divided by the French into four groups or circles; that to the west with eight islands, the north with five, the centre with fourteen, the eastern of seventeen islands. They are all coralline or lagoon reefs, with three exceptions, and a few have entrances for large vessels.

The native population of the entire archipelago only amounts to 3,500, of which 700 are still uncivilized. There has been much improvement of late in their houses and clothing, to procure which they have opened some branches of industry, the chief of which is cocoanut oil and mother-of-pearl shell.

#### MARQUESAS ARCHIPELAGO.

The Marquesas Archipelago is composed of two tolerably distinct groups, lying in a general N.W. and S.E. direction, between the parallels of lat.  $7^{\circ} 50'$  and  $10^{\circ} 31'$  S., and long.  $138^{\circ} 39'$  and  $140^{\circ} 46'$  W. They are all of volcanic origin, very high, and may be seen in clear weather at fifteen or twenty leagues distance.

The sovereignty of the group was ceded to France by a treaty with Admiral Du Petit Thouars, in May, 1842, and a military colony was established in Taiohai Bay, at Nukahiva, but the result was in no way commensurate with the expense of the establishment; and this, after the experiment lasted seventeen years, was abandoned on the 1st January, 1859.

*Nuka-Hiva* is the principal island of the Marquesas Archipelago. It is seventeen miles in length from east to west, and ten miles broad. It has been frequently visited and described, and its inhabitants are perhaps the best known of any in the archipelago. The population of this island was estimated by Captain Krusenstern, when he visited it in 1804, at 18,000. Notwithstanding the opinion of Krusenstern that his estimate for so large an island was low in 1804, it is reduced to 8,000 by the estimate of M. de Tessan in 1838, and to 2,690 by Lieutenant Jouan in 1856.

*O-hiva-oa*, or *La Dominica*, is the most fertile, the most populous (6,000 inhabitants), and the most important for its productions of the whole archipelago. It is about twenty-one miles long from E. by N. to S. by W., and seven miles in its average breadth.

The following remarks are from the report of Commodore R. A. Powell, C.B., of H.M.S. "Topaze," 1867:—

"*Magdalena Island.*—On June 8, at 9 a.m., the island of Magdalena was sighted, bearing W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  N., and distant forty miles, the summit of the high mountain being observed in the clouds. The eastern side of the island is extremely rugged, steep ridges coming down from the central mountain, and terminating in high precipices over the sea. Very few of the valleys or gorges appear to reach the beach, so that, independent of a dangerous surf which dashed against the rocks, landing would have been quite impracticable. On the north and south sides of the island the land sloped more regularly towards the sea, but there was no landing.

"Point Venus, on the south side, is a perpendicular rocky cliff, about 700 feet high, overhanging the sea, which breaks within a few yards of its base; from some points of view the break assumes the appearance of a reef extending out farther than it really does. Bon Repos Bay is immediately round Point Venus, on the western side of the island, and the best anchorage is about a mile from the shore in seventeen fathoms, opposite a shingly beach, with the valley well open. This bay is open to westerly winds, which, according to the native account, blow occasionally with great force from December to March, which would appear to be the bad months. A heavy surf rolls continually on the beach, but landing can be effected on the rocks on the north side of the bay. Water can be obtained, but with difficulty, as boats must lie a considerable distance from the beach where the stream comes down. The valley, which winds up among the hills from the bottom of the bay, is very beautiful, being covered with the rich foliage of tropical fruit trees, whilst the native cottages and huts, sheltered under the breadfruit, cocoanut, and orange trees, add greatly to the attractiveness of the scene.

"Fruits of all descriptions are to be procured in sufficient quantities to refresh a large ship's