A Note on the Topography of Christmas Island, Indian Ocean

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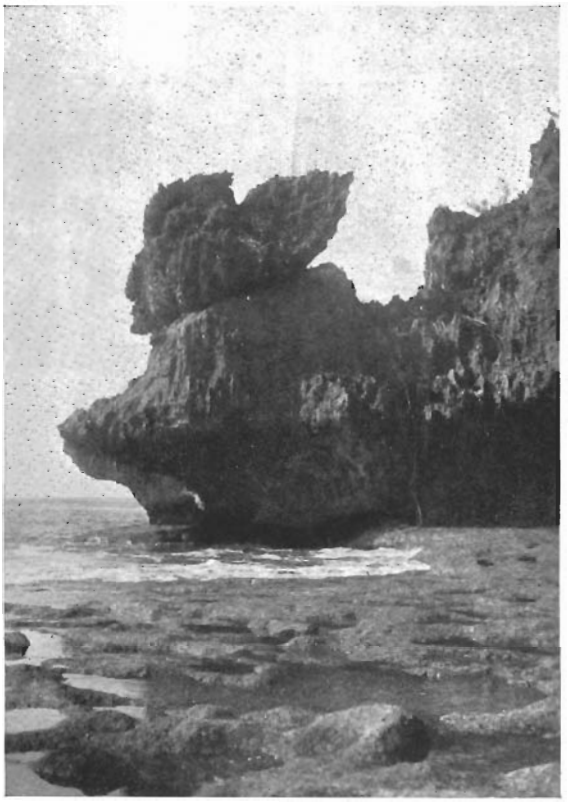
(Plates I, II.)

Almost the whole of the coast of the island is formed by steep, but usually not very high, limestone cliffs at the base of which is a fringing coral reef of varying width, outside which the submarine slope descends steeply to a depth of over 2,000 fathoms. At infrequent intervals there are embayments or coves, the largest being Flying Fish Cove where the main settlement is situated.

Plate I, upper figure, shows a small cove of this nature with part of the fringing reef exposed.

Above the sea cliffs there is a terrace of varying width which forms a very constant feature, almost completely surrounding the island. Near the outer edge there is usually no soil, but only deeply fissured limestone, weathered into jagged pinnacles, and the vegetation is low and sparse. This type of scenery is shown in the lower figure on Plate I. The inner part of the shore terrace is in places rocky and deeply fissured, but is mostly covered by soil and occupied by large trees which harbour the nests of gannets and frigate birds.

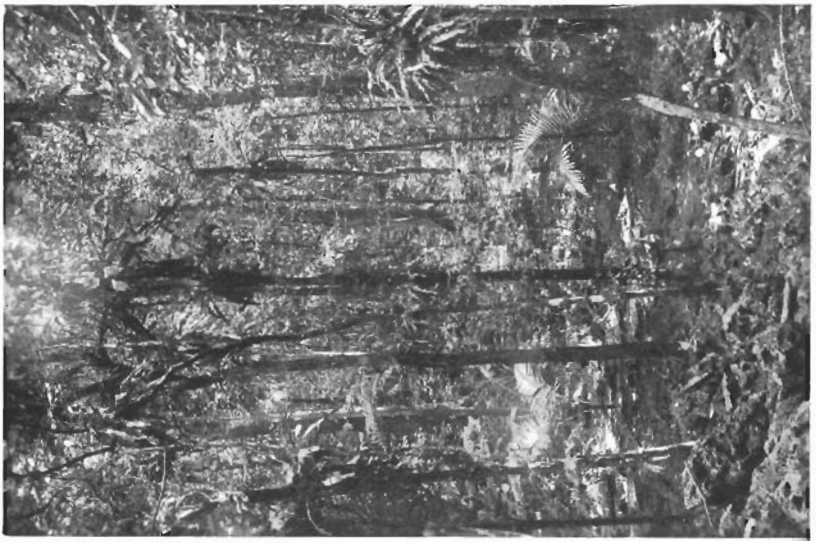
The shore terrace is bounded on the landward side by another steep cliff, above which are other rather ill-defined cliffs and terraces surmounted by the plateau which forms the greater part of the area of the island. This is completely covered by jungle, two photographs of which are reproduced on Plate II. On the plateau there are several hills, the highest of which, Murray Hill, rises to a height of about 1,170 feet. The steeper slopes of these hills are covered with boulders and deeply fissured outcrops of limestone.



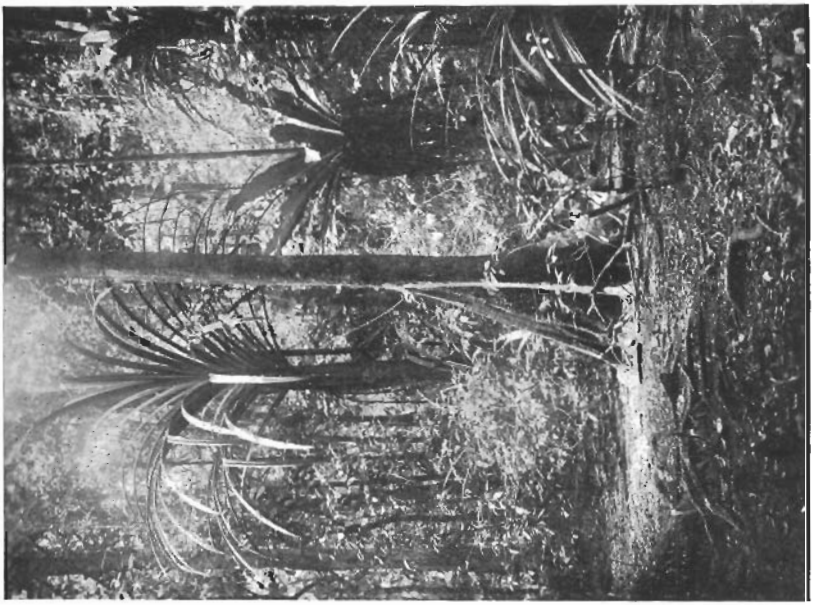
Coral reef exposed at low tide.

Limestone pinnacles on the shore terrace.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND, INDIAN OCEAN.



Jungle on the plateau.



DIAN OCEAN.