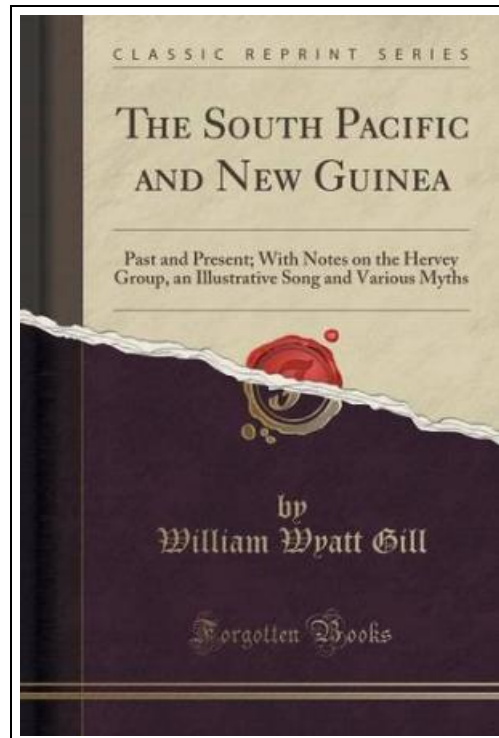


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Forgotten Books, United States, 2015. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 229 x 152 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book ***** Print on Demand *****.Excerpt from *The South Pacific and New Guinea: Past and Present; With Notes on the Hervey Group, an Illustrative Song and Various Myths* The true coral islands, or atolls, are very unattractive, rising only 10 or 15 ft. above high-water mark. The soil consists merely of sand and broken coral, washed on to the reefs by Old Ocean. In this wretched soil grow luxuriantly the coco-nut palm, the screw pine, Cordia Hernandia, Calophyllum inophyllum, with a few other lofty forest trees and low shrubs. Seagoing canoes, carefully preserved from generation to generation, are made out of the Cordia, the wood of the Calophyllum being too hard to be hollowed out with their ancient shell adzes. So poor is the vegetation of these atolls that not more than fifty species of plants have been found in the Tokelau, Ellice, and Gilbert Groups. All the species consist of littoral plants found on the volcanic islands. The fauna of these atolls consists chiefly of a few birds, lizards, small brown rats, and insects. On approaching one of them, the eye rests upon a forest of coco-nut palms rising apparently out of the ocean; so abundantly does this invaluable palm - the staff of life to thousands of Polynesians - grow on these tropical sand-banks, the roots (in many instances) layed by the sea. In three atolls known to me, the lagoons are of fresh water, thereby enabling the inhabitants to cultivate successfully the food-plants of the volcanic islands. The singular circumstance of a large body of fresh water, marked off from the ocean by only half-a-mile of coral reef, may be thus accounted for; these atolls are believed to be...



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