

their boundaries; but there is almost nothing of this kind in the maps of the South Sea Islands. And then the names; old and new, Spanish, Dutch, French, English, and native, are blundered in all proportions, and spelled in all varieties, and upon every principle known and recognized in orthography.

But as a help to a better understanding of this chaos of Islands, we may mention that, exclusive of Australia and New Zealand, geographers have arranged the South Sea Islands under three divisions, *Polynesia*, *Melanesia*, and *Micronesia*.—*Polynesia*, or the *Many Islands*, was the name at first applied, in a general way, to the whole of the islands; then they were divided into Eastern and Western *Polynesia*; but now *Polynesia* is restricted to the eastern islands, situated between long. 180° E., the last meridian, and South America. *Melanesia*, or the *Black Islands*, so called from the colour of the inhabitants, comprises all the islands south of the line from long. 180° E. to New Guinea, including the Feejee group, the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, the Loyalty Islands, the Solomon Group, and other islands.—*Micronesia*, or the *Little Islands* comprises all the islands north of the line, west of Hawaii or the Sandwich Islands, including the Kingsmill group, the Scarborough range, the Radick and the Ralick chains, and a multitude of others.

The South Sea Islands are inhabited by two distinct races. *Polynesia*, including New Zealand, is inhabited by what are called the Malay race, a people evidently of Asiatic origin; in their persons tall and well formed, with light yellow skin, and smooth glossy black hair. Their language is soft and mellifluous, rivalling if not surpassing the Italian itself. It is a peculiar language, that not only every word, but every syllable ends with a vowel. While of the consonants, it is the semi-vowels *l m n r s*, and the slender consonants *k p t*, that are most commonly used; there are no gutturals, and *ng* is the only double consonant, while even that, in some of the dialects, is softened into *n*. If on a map of the South Sea Islands, a point is fixed upon at Easter Island, another to the north of the Sandwich Islands, and a third on the south of New Zealand; and if lines

are drawn from these three points, so as to form a triangle on the map, this triangle will include nearly the whole of the Malay Polynesian race. While the language spoken by all the Malay Polynesians is one, the natives of nearly every group of islands speak a different dialect of this one language. There are at least seven distinctly marked dialects: the Hawaiian, the Marquesas, the Tahitian, the Rarotongan, the Samoan, the Tongan, and the New Zealand. The Samoan is by far the softest and smoothest. The New Zealand is the strongest and roughest. The one is the Ionic of *Polynesia*, the other is the Doric. Climate, it is said, by affecting the muscles of the mouth, has a strongly modifying influence upon language. Certain it is, that Samoa, where the softest dialect is spoken, is the warmest locality; whereas New Zealand is the coldest. But the softness and liquid smoothness of their language brings one great disadvantage to the Polynesians. It renders them nearly incapable of pronouncing English.

*Melanesia*, or, as it is sometimes still called, Western *Polynesia*, is inhabited by a totally different people, commonly called the Papuan, or Negrito or Negrillo race; the most of them less in size than the Polynesians. With crisp hair of different shades, but never glossy black, their skin dark, a sort of coffee-and-milk colour, and their features coarse; their whole appearance pointing to an African origin, but without the prognathous, protruding jaws of the genuine negro. Their language is quite distinct, belongs to an entirely different family of languages from that of the Malay Polynesian, and is endlessly diversified. Not only on every group, but on every island a different dialect is spoken, and so widely different are they as to be almost, often altogether, unintelligible to the inhabitants of the adjoining island. It will be difficult to say, till the languages are more fully examined and compared, than they have yet been, how far they are connected by a common paternity. On the south of the New Hebrides, the dialects have evidently sprung from a common language; there are strong resemblances in grammatical structure, but the diversity in vocabularies is very great. One would almost think that the whole race came direct from Babel; and that the inhabitants of one