

and crevice gleamed with starry corals, bright hued shells and various creatures of even stranger forms, while fish of all hues darted through the water as clear as crystal. How a naturalist would have enjoyed the sight: it would repay an enthusiast in his science for a voyage to the antipodes.

A hail from the boat recalled me from my wanderings. I found they had obtained a sufficient load, and we departed. On our return to the island I got Campbell to show me the process of preparing their strange merchandise for market. It was a simple affair: the "fish" taken from the boat were thrown into iron cauldrons over a wood fire, and boiled, the soft, jelly-like, elastic creatures containing such a large quantity of water that it was not necessary to add any. After being sufficiently cooked they were laid on light frames in houses for the purpose, and smoked by wood-fires. When thoroughly dried they were packed in sacks and were ready for market.

"John Chinaman is our customer," said Campbell, "and he is willing to pay a good price for this luxury for his soups and stews. These fish are worth eighty to ninety pounds a ton, and those from one hundred to one hundred and twenty pounds."

"It must be a profitable speculation," I said.

"Well, it takes a good many fish to make a ton: see, they have shrunk to less than a quarter the size they were when alive. Still it is not a bad spec.—large fortunes have been made at it, and what has been done once can be done again."

It was not all work on the island, I found. The fact was the *beche-de-mer* must be cured as soon as caught: so the fishers had to leave off early, and the after processes required few hands.

One of the favorite amusements of the Kanakas in their leisure hours

was fishing, at which they were most successful. Their great motive did not appear to be to procure an addition to their food: indeed they fed well, having plenty of rice and Indian corn meal, yams and cocoanuts brought from the Islands, and pumpkins grown on the spot, besides flour and meat occasionally. The principal attraction of the sport seemed to be its aquatic nature: they might almost be classed among amphibious animals. Every evening groups of them might be seen luxuriating in the water, racing, splashing and ducking each other, and performing a variety of antics.

Altogether the South Sea Islanders on this island were obviously well treated and quite contented with their lot. Their muscular yet rounded forms, and skins as sleek as the coat of a Derby favourite, spoke plainly of their bodily health; and no one who saw their bright faces and heard their merry laughter could doubt their mental satisfaction.

What with studying their habits, going with them to the reefs, sailing about in the evening, shooting or fishing, and listening to Campbell's wild yarns, I was at no loss for amusement during the next few days. Before I had time to get tired of the place the Zantippe returned, and cast anchor opposite the little settlement.

This time her commanding officer, Capt. Bustard, landed, and there was a grand ceremony, an inspection of the blacks. Like many other official inspections it was a complete farce. For want of a language to communicate in, it was impossible to learn whether they had been coerced, or even if they were from the French Islands at all. One thing was evident, that they were not discontented, and as Capt. Bustard said, "If they were kidnapped, they have become reconciled to their lot, for I never saw fellows look jollier."

Campbell's cue was to say little and admit less, but there was a twinkle in his keen grey eyes, and a knowing look