

pains to collect every kind. Exclusive of spiders, which were numerous, there were thirteen species.¹ Of these, one only was a beetle. A small ant swarmed by thousands under the loose dry blocks of coral, and was the only true insect which was abundant. Although the productions of the land are thus scanty, if we look to the waters of the surrounding sea, the number of organic beings is indeed infinite. Chamisso has described² the natural history of a lagoon-island in the Radack Archipelago; and it is remarkable how closely its inhabitants, in number and kind, resemble those of Keeling Island. There is one lizard and two waders, namely, a snipe and curlew. Of plants there are nineteen species, including a fern; and some of these are the same with those growing here, though on a spot so immensely remote, and in a different ocean.

The long strips of land, forming the linear islets, have been raised only to that height to which the surf can throw fragments of coral, and the wind heap up calcareous sand. The solid flat of coral rock on the outside, by its breadth, breaks the first violence of the waves, which otherwise, in a day, would sweep away these islets and all their productions. The ocean and the land seem here struggling for mastery: although terra firma has obtained a footing, the denizens of the water think their claim at least equally good. In every part one meets hermit-crabs of more than one species,³ carrying on their backs the shells which they have stolen from the neighboring beach. Overhead, numerous gannets, frigate-birds, and terns, rest on the trees; and the wood, from the many nests and from the smell of the atmosphere,

¹ The thirteen species belong to the following orders: In the Coleoptera, a minute Elater; Orthoptera, a Gryllus and a Blatta; Hemiptera, one species; Homoptera, two; Neuroptera, a Chrysopa; Hymenoptera, two ants; Lepidoptera nocturna, a Diopæa; and a Pterophorus (?); Diptera, two species.

² Kotzebue's First Voyage, vol. iii. p. 222.

³ The large claws or pincers of some of these crabs are most beautifully adapted, when drawn back, to form an operculum to the shell, nearly as perfect as the proper one originally belonging to the molluscou's animal. I was assured, and as far as my observation went I found it so, that certain species of the hermit-crabs always use certain species of shells.