

thousand beauties, have indulged in rather exuberant language.

April 6th.—I accompanied Captain Fitz Roy to an island at the head of the lagoon: the channel was exceedingly intricate, winding through fields of delicately branched corals. We saw several turtle, and two boats were then employed in catching them. The water was so clear and shallow, that although at first a turtle quickly dives out of sight, yet in a canoe or boat under sail the pursuers after no very long chase come up to it. A man standing ready in the bow at this moment dashes through the water upon the turtle's back; then clinging with both hands by the shell of its neck he is carried away till the animal becomes exhausted and is secured. It was quite an interesting chase to see the two boats thus doubling about, and the men dashing headforemost into the water trying to seize their prey. Captain Moresby informs me that in the Chagos Archipelago, in this same ocean, the natives by a horrible process take the shell from the back of the living turtle. "It is covered with burning charcoal, which causes the outer shell to curl upward; it is then forced off with a knife, and before it becomes cold flattened between boards. After this barbarous process the animal is suffered to regain its native element, where, after a certain time, a new shell is formed; it is, however, too thin to be of any service, and the animal always appears languishing and sickly."

When we arrived at the head of the lagoon, we crossed a narrow islet, and found a great surf breaking on the windward coast. I can hardly explain the reason, but there is to my mind much grandeur in the view of the outer shores of these lagoon-islands. There is a simplicity in the barrier-like beach, the margin of green bushes and tall cocoanuts, the solid flat of dead coral-rock, strewed here and there with great loose fragments, and the line of furious breakers, all rounding away toward either hand. The ocean throwing its waters over the broad reef appears an invincible, all-powerful enemy; yet we see it resisted and even conquered by means