

a great mass of fat, which, when melted, sometimes yields as much as a quart bottle full of limpid oil. It has been stated by some authors that the Birgos crawls up the cocoanut trees for the purpose of stealing the nuts: I very much doubt the possibility of this; but with the Pandanus¹ the task would be very much easier. I was told by Mr. Liesk that on these islands the Birgos lives only on the nuts which have fallen to the ground.

Captain Moresby informs me that this crab inhabits the Chagos and Seychelle groups, but not the neighboring Maldiva Archipelago. It formerly abounded at Mauritius, but only a few small ones are now found there. In the Pacific, this species, or one with closely allied habits, is said² to inhabit a single coral island, north of the Society group. To show the wonderful strength of the front pair of pincers, I may mention that Captain Moresby confined one in a strong tin box which had held biscuits, the lid being secured with wire; but the crab turned down the edges and escaped. In turning down the edges, it actually punched many small holes quite through the tin!

I was a good deal surprised by finding two species of coral of the genus *Millepora* (*M. complanata* and *alcicornis*) possessed of the power of stinging. The stony branches or plates, when taken fresh from the water, have a harsh feel and are not slimy, although possessing a strong and disagreeable smell. The stinging property seems to vary in different specimens: when a piece was pressed or rubbed on the tender skin of the face or arm a pricking sensation was usually caused, which came on after the interval of a second, and lasted only for a few minutes. One day, however, by merely touching my face with one of the branches, pain was instantaneously caused; it increased as usual after a few seconds, and, remaining sharp for some minutes, was perceptible for half an hour afterward. The sensation was as bad as that

¹ See Proceedings of Zoological Society, 1832, p. 17.

² Tyerman and Bennett, Voyage, etc., vol. ii. p. 33.