

island. After being on the reef half an hour, we joined our boats, and returned on board near sunset. One canoe was reported, the next morning, as having been seen from the Peacock.

The number of inhabitants that we saw certainly did not exceed one hundred and twenty.

The common house-fly was found in great numbers at this island. A number of fish were caught; some shells, and specimens of most of the plants, were also procured.

After lying-to for the night, we, at daylight on the 16th, bore away for Serle Island, having first ascertained our distance from the point of Clermont de Tonnerre by triangulation. We then ran by the patent log for Serle Island direct, by which means we made the distance between the two islands, twenty-six miles and two-tenths. No signs of any other island exist between these two. This will, I think, settle the question between Duperrey and Beechey. The latter is undoubtedly wrong as respects the longitude of Clermont de Tonnerre, which he places some twenty minutes too far to the eastward, and I doubt not some accidental error has occurred in his observations; for I find, at Serle Island, Duperrey, Beechey, and myself, agree within a few minutes.

Serle is a low coral island, and has a large and very regular clump of trees on its western end, which at a distance might be taken for a mound or hill. Its length is seven miles, and its width one and a fourth. It lies in a northwest and southeast direction. There are but few inhabitants on it. The position of its southeast end is in latitude $18^{\circ} 21' 10''$ S., longitude $137^{\circ} 04' 10''$ W.

The vessels again separated for its survey; * boats were sent to trace the reef, and have communication with the natives, if possible. Before night we had completed our survey, and the boats returned. Lieutenant Alden, in charge of one of them, reported that he had had communication with the natives, who were very friendly and desirous of holding intercourse with him. He obtained several articles of curiosity from them. Some of them were tattooed. They were found to be arrant thieves, wishing to carry off every thing they saw, trying even to pull the copper off the blades of the oars,—and all this apparently without any idea that it was wrong. When first seen they were armed with spears, but observing that we did not attempt to land, they sent them away in charge of a boy, and swam off to the boat.

I now determined to wait until the next day, for the purpose of having further communication with them, and ordered every thing to

* For the mode of making the surveys of the Coral Islands, see Appendix XLI.