

Bay. The Leonidas saluted the Peacock with nine guns, which it was regretted could not be returned except by cheers, for the chronometers forbade all unnecessary firing. To Captain Eagleston the squadron is much indebted, and it affords me great pleasure to make my acknowledgments to him for his attentions and assistance rendered the service we were upon. I am also indebted to him for some observations relative to the gales that have occurred among these islands, which will be spoken of in another place.

Captain Eagleston was engaged in taking the biche de mar, sometimes known as the sea-slug. The animal belongs to the genus *Holothuria*, and the prepared article finds a ready sale in the China market, where it is used as an ingredient in rich soups. Of the biche de mar there are several kinds, some of which are much superior in quality to the others; they are distinguishable both by shape and colour, but more particularly by the latter. One of the inferior kinds is slender and of a dark brown colour, soft to the touch, and leaves a red stain on the hands; another is of a gray colour and speckled; a third is large and dark yellow, with a rough skin and tubercles on its sides.

The second kind is often eaten raw by the natives.

The valuable sorts are six in number: one of a dark red colour; a second is black, from two inches to nine inches in length, and its surface, when cured, resembles crape; a third kind is large and of a dark gray colour, which, when cured, becomes a dirty white; the fourth resembles the third, except in colour, which is a dark brown; the fifth variety is of a dirty white colour, with tubercles on its sides, and retains its colour when cured; the sixth is red, prickly, and of a different shape and larger size than the others; when cured, it becomes dark.

The most esteemed kinds are found on the reefs, in water from one to two fathoms in depth, where they are caught by diving. The inferior sorts are found on reefs which are dry, or nearly so, at low water, where they are picked up by the natives. The natives also fish the biche de mar, on rocky coral bottom, by the light of the moon or of torches, for the animals keep themselves drawn up in holes in the sand or rocks by day, and come forth by night to feed, when they may be taken in great quantities. The motions of the animal resemble those of a caterpillar, and it feeds by suction, drawing in with its food much fine coral and some small shells.

Captain Eagleston stated that the biche de mar is found in greatest abundance on reefs composed of a mixture of sand and coral. The animal is rare on the southern side of any of the islands, and the most