

As our naturalists could have no opportunity of rambling over the island of Sooloo, it was thought that one of the neighbouring islands (although not so good a field) would afford them many of the same results, and that they could examine it unmolested. Accordingly, at an early hour, they were despatched in boats for that purpose, with a sufficient guard to attend them in case of necessity. The island on which they landed is called Marongas on the map of the group annexed to this chapter. On it are two hills of volcanic conglomerate and vesicular lava, containing angular fragments embedded. The bottom was covered with living coral, of every variety, and of different colours; but there was nothing like a regular coral shelf, and the beach was composed of bits of coral intermixed with dead shells, both entire and comminuted. The centre of the island was covered with mangrove-bushes; the hills were cones, but had no craters on them. The mangroves had grown in clusters, giving the appearance of a number of small islets. This, with the neighbouring islands, were thought to be composed in a great part of coral, but it was impossible for our gentlemen to determine the fact.

The day was exceedingly hot, and the island was suffering to such a degree from drought that the leaves in many cases were curled and appeared dry. On the face of the rocky cliff they saw many swallows (*hirundo esculenta*) flying in and out of the caverns facing the sea; but they were not fortunate enough to find any of the edible nests, so much esteemed by Chinese epicures.

At another part of the island they heard the crowing of a cock, and discovered a small village, almost hidden by the mangroves, and built over the water. In the neighbourhood were several fish-baskets set out to dry, as well as a quantity of fencing for weirs, all made of rattan. Their shape was somewhat peculiar. After a little while the native fishermen were seen approaching, who evidently had a knowledge of their visit from the first. They came near with great caution in their canoes; but after the first had spoken and reconnoitred, several others landed, exhibiting no signs of embarrassment, and soon motioned our party off. To indicate that force would be resorted to, in case of refusal, at the same time they pointed to their arms, and drew their kris. Our gentlemen took this all in good part, and, after dispensing a few trifling presents among them, began their retreat with a convenient speed, without, however, compromising their dignity.

The excursion had been profitable in the way of collections, having yielded a number of specimens of shrubs and trees, both in flower and fruit; but owing to the drought, the herbaceous plants were, for the most part, dried up. Among the latter, however, they saw a large and