

soundings of seventy-five fathoms. Cagayan Sooloo has a pleasant appearance from the sea, and may be termed a high island. It is less covered with undergrowth and mangrove-bushes than the neighbouring islands, and the reefs are comparatively small. It has fallen off in importance; and by comparing former accounts with those I received, and from its present aspect, it would seem that it has decreased both in population and products. Its caves formerly supplied a large quantity of edible birds'-nests; large numbers of cattle were to be found upon it; and its cultivation was carried on to some extent. These articles of commerce are not so much attended to at the present time, and the biche de mar and tortoise-shell, formerly brought hither, are now carried to other places. There is a small anchorage on the west side, but we did not visit it. There are no dangers near these small islands that may not be guarded against. Our survey extended only to their size and situation, as I deemed it my duty to devote all the remainder of the time I had to spare to the Straits of Balabac.

After the night set in, we continued sounding every ten minutes, and occasionally got bottom in from thirty to seventy fathoms. At midnight, the water shoaled to twenty fathoms, when I dropped the anchor until daylight. We shortly afterwards had a change of wind, and a heavy squall passed over us.

In the morning we had no shoal ground near us, and the bank on which we had anchored was found to be of small size; it is probable that we had dropped the anchor on the shoalest place. Vessels have nothing to fear in this respect.

At 9 A. M. of the 8th, we made the Mangsee Islands ahead of us, and likewise Balabac to the north, and Balambangan to the south. Several sand-banks and extensive reefs were also seen between them. On seeing the ground on which we had to operate, of which the published charts give no idea whatever, I determined to proceed, and take a central position with the ship under the Mangsee Islands; but in order not to lose time, I hoisted out and dropped two boats, under Lieutenant Perry, to survey the first sand-bank we came to, which lies a few miles to the eastward of these islands, with orders to effect this duty and join me at the anchorage, or find a shelter under the lee of the islands.

At half-past 2 P. M. we anchored near the reef, in thirty-six fathoms water. I thought myself fortunate in getting bottom, as the reefs on closing with them seemed to indicate but little appearance of it.

The rest of the day was spent in preparing the boats for our operations. I now felt the want of the tender. Although in the absence