

with which the Coral Sea is studded; and which, therefore, makes this passage very dangerous, notwithstanding all the recent surveys which have been made.

We anchored in shallow water off Raine Island, a low reef covered with scanty vegetation. On landing, sea-birds were found to exist in vast numbers, rising and hovering above us in clouds thick enough to darken the air. Each description appeared to keep its own selected breeding-place, the nests being on the bare sandy ground, with little or no attempt at building, except on the part of the pretty black and white tern, which prefer to build on the low scrub, slightly raised from the ground. The next day we proceeded towards Bird Islands, where we anchored for the night. They are three low, wooded islets, situated on the margin of a circular coral reef. There were no natives seen either here or on Sir Charles Hardy Islands, which we afterwards passed. On the 1st September we arrived at Somerset, Cape York, the north-east point of Australia. The barren, sandy appearance of the coast, seen through the thick mist which, apparently, always accompanies the trade-wind, as we ran quickly past, gave anything but pleasing or hopeful first impressions; and this feeling each day's stay at this solitary outpost only served to intensify. The Colonial Government support the small settlement, and the monthly mail between the colony and