

The custom, however, shows signs of dying out, for it has already to some extent reached a rudimentary condition. In large war-vessels, the actual fighting guns are considered too big to be played with in this manner, and a special saluting battery of small old pattern guns, useless for any other purpose, is kept mounted on the fore-castle for the sole sake of making this hideous noise.

I have read of a case in which in a small out-of-the-way European colony, the governor had to send on board a foreign man-of-war which had arrived in his port to beg for powder to return the customary salute. We may, however, congratulate ourselves that matters might be worse; there are some unfortunate races, the members of which have to spend their money in powder and let it off, on all occasions of petty private domestic rejoicing.

The coral banks, though abundant, were not so easily accessible at Amboina as at Banda, being in deeper water, and specimens of most of the species could only be procured by deep wading and diving. After diving for corals in a depth of about ten to twelve feet, I found my eyes very sore for some hours afterwards. I believe that this soreness was most probably produced by the stinging organs of the corals; all corals are provided with urticating organs. The stinging produced by the Hydroid corals of the genus *Millepora* was long ago noted by Darwin and others.* In the West Indies the coral is sometimes called sea-ginger.

In the case of most Anthozoan corals, the stinging organs are not powerful enough to make themselves felt through the skin of the hands, but I have often felt my hands tingle after having been employed in collecting corals, other than *Millepora*, on the reefs.

In diving, the face and open eyes are brought close to the corals at the moment that these are grasped and irritated, and it seems possible that the eyes might become seriously inflamed and injured by the action on them of the nettle-cells. I mention the circumstance as a warning to collectors; where *Milleporids* are present, great care should certainly be exercised.

On the shore of the harbour of Amboina, coral reef rock occurs raised many hundred feet above sea level, forming a steep hill-slope. At the summit of the ridges so formed the rock stands out here and there, weathered into fantastic pinnacles, with surfaces honeycombed by the action of rain, just as at Bermuda.†

* "Journal of Researches," p. 464.

† See page 19.