

The barren sandy appearance of the coast, as the ship ran quickly past it towards Albany Pass, gave anything but pleasing or hopeful impressions, nor were they bettered during the few days' stay at this distant, solitary outpost of the colony of Queensland. Whilst the large and profitable pearl fishery continues to be carried on in Torres Strait, it is necessary to maintain a station in the vicinity. The site occupied was convenient and healthy, two very important factors in choosing a place for a new settlement, and there seemed little object in changing it. However, since the Expedition's visit, the Government staff has been transferred to Thursday Island in Torres Strait, and the mail steamers now call there. No fresh provisions are procurable at Thursday Island, and the water is bad. There is a small quantity of coal in a hulk belonging to the Eastern and Australian Steamship Company.

Owing to the anchorage opposite the settlement of Somerset being occupied by two or three small vessels, the Challenger had to moor rather farther out in the stream than otherwise would have been necessary. This necessitated the ship being steered when she swung to the ebb tide, as the wind was then aft, and when not steered, the vessel sheered five to six points away from the true direction of the stream; and on one occasion, with the strength of the tide on the broadside, the northwest anchor dragged a considerable distance over the rocky ground before the ship could be brought head on to the stream. This only occurred during the night, the day tides being much weaker. In mooring or anchoring here it is well to keep the cable slack when first the anchor is let go, as the holding ground is so bad, being all rock, that the cables require to be at a good angle before the anchor will bite at all.

In entering the Albany Pass it was surprising to find that the calculated time of high water corresponded neither with the actual time of high water by the shore, nor the turn of the stream. The calculation was made on the assumption that the age of the tide was two days. No age of tide is given in the sailing directions, nor is any mention made of peculiarities in the tidal wave, or stream, either there or in the voyages of the "Fly" and "Rattlesnake," the only remark made being relative to velocity. During the stay a tide pole was established on shore, and a register kept of the turn of the stream, &c. The four days' observations showed that there were two regular tides, and tidal streams, in the twenty-four hours, but there was a marked difference between them; although they both fell to nearly the same level, the night tide rose nearly twice the height of the day tide above low water. The ebb and flow during the night occupied fourteen hours, and during the day ten hours. In each case the stream turned one hour after high or low water by the shore, the flood running northwest and the ebb southeast. The highest tide registered was nine days after full and change, or when, ordinarily speaking, neap tides might be expected, and the velocity of the stream was also greatest at this time. These peculiarities may possibly extend over the whole of Torres Strait, for the same phenomena are recorded as taking place in the channels