

almost relieves the natives from the necessity of work supplies the merchant with valuable products with little effort or outlay.

One special object which we had in selecting the town of Zebu as one of our places of call was to make out, if possible, something of the habits and mode of life of the beautiful sponge, the "Venus's flower-basket," which is said to be obtained only at one spot off the island of Mactan, close to Zebu. A party of Indians used to this work were engaged, and accompanied our "Philos" in the steam-pinnace to the fishing-ground. They brought with them some curious and ingeniously contrived instruments with which they bring the sponges up: two long strips of bamboo, meeting at an angle of about 45 degrees, to the outer edges of which are secured some forty or fifty large fish-hooks, with their barbs set forward towards the angle. The whole affair is strengthened with an elaborate system of stays, and weighted with stones, so as to sink it to the required depth. When all is ready, it is put overboard, and with a tow-line dragged slowly over the bottom. After about an hour has elapsed, it is hauled in, and several Euplectellas are found entangled amongst the hooks. They have a very different appearance at first from the cones of glassy network that they afterwards present when cleaned. The silver beard is clogged with the dark-grey mud in which they live, buried to about one-third of their height, and the network of the