

ISLAND SKETCHES.

By K. E. LEEFE.

THE COPRA BUG.



"COPRA bug" is a biped about the size of a large ape, he is a very amusing fellow when he likes; but when he does not like—be-ware! He is a born cheat, and has a great capacity for imbibing. Strange to say, as a rule, "Copra bugs" do not get on together unless a case of hollands has just been landed from the trading schooner. When it is finished, they hate each other worse than ever. "Copra bugs," of course, wear clothes, generally a pair of khaki trousers, a singlet, and a pair of scales slung over their backs with a dirty piece of rope. Their evening costume is usually four yards of print with the usual singlet, shirts are luxuries known only when a schooner comes in. Full dress is a suit of pyjamas. The "copra bug" generally takes, for better or worse, a native woman, and soon has a numerous family, for "copra bugs" are very prolific. To analyse his brain would astonish a psychologist. To begin with, it is small, and copra and gin are written in large letters in the centre, his liver is abnormal, and he has a stomach like an ostrich, which, marvellous to relate, is coated with a wonderful sea-green enamel, like the cave of Vavau. "The cause?" you ask—drinking kava, the native beverage. In addition, he generally has either a swollen leg or arm, the result of elephantiasis. But for all this he is a happy creature, he is not rich, but he knows not poverty, the

lagoon in front of his house is full of fish, and there is fruit galore at the back, lucky man.

Do not imagine for a moment that "copra bugs" are beach-combers! That would hurt their feelings terribly; for, of course, they have feelings. A "copra bug," is, strange to say, often of good family, and has, perhaps, had a college education. How he got to such an outlandish place, he hardly knows himself, possibly from reading Robinson Crusoe, and other books of adventure. Or, he may have "left his country for his country's good." However, as he still has feelings, we will not venture to probe them. The missionaries are the "copra bugs'" worst enemies, they naturally turn in horror from their evil ways. But a "copra bug" has no soul to save.

They earn their living by keeping trade in boxes, which they exchange with natives for dry cocoanut or copra, from this they derive their name of "copra bug." Some of them get on so well that they leave the outlying islands, and start as copra merchants in Fiji and other large islands; they buy a schooner, and then delight to be termed "Copra Kings." English "copra bugs" prefer to stay on the island where they first started, and send their children to the Colonies to be educated. Dutch "copra bugs" are much more bumptious and over-bearing; as soon as they become Copra Kings, they consider themselves up-to-date society gentlemen, with plenty of oil on their almost bald sandy heads, and quarts of