

India *courie chunam*, a mixture of pulverized shells and cement, which in that country is used for the coating of columns in the interior of houses, giving them an appearance as though made of ivory. The trade died out, and may perhaps never be revived; but it is not the possible uses of the shells to which I would draw attention, but the fact of their containing *pearls*, which are exceedingly valuable, though as yet, I believe, almost, if not altogether, unknown to the commercial world. The first occasion upon which I remember to have noticed one of these gems as being of any possible value, was upon seeing one of them in the possession of a Rakahangan, who had brought it from Fanning Island. I was commissioned to buy it by a passenger of a vessel for which I was employed to trade. I purchased it for a plug of cavendish tobacco. The passenger subsequently sold it to the surgeon of the ship for £10. The surgeon gave it (as he afterwards told me) to his wife in Australia, after having refused the offer of £25 made to him for it by a jeweller of Sydney. Its appearance was very extraordinary and beautiful. Its size was about that of a pea; it was round upon one side, on the other slightly flattened. Its lustre was crystalline; in the centre appeared a luminous point, from which radiated innumerable bright rays distinctly defined.

On another occasion, a pearl of this kind was shown to me by a trader, who asked my opinion concerning its value. He had bought it from a savage of the Kingsmills for four fathoms of cotton print. I told him that, to the best of my belief, it could not be worth less than 1,000 dollars, which I would have been very willing to have given him for it. It was not globular, but somewhat of the shape of a very convex magnifying lens, perfectly symmetrical and without a fault; its diameter was considerably more than half an inch, and its thickness about two-thirds of its diameter. It showed the same kind of luminous point in the centre as the one I have already described, with the same radiations. I do not know what became of it. In the larger *Paahua*, these pearls are found in the body of the fish (as the true pearls are in the muscle of the oyster); they are very common, so much so that in some places, as in the coral lagoons near the equator, a man may collect 100 or more out of a day's fishing, but they are generally of irregular shapes, and perfectly opaque, like bone. Such as are well formed and of sufficient lustre to be called a gem, are rare, but are nevertheless to be met with occasionally, of so great size as to induce the belief that, if the search for them were systematically pursued, the fishers would stand a very good chance to make a fortune. I have never known any one to fish for these shells for the sake of their pearls, but from those *Paahuas* which we were in the habit of eating, I have seen some extracted of good shape (but opaque and of the appearance of bone), as large as an Enfield bullet. I have seen others, again, milky or semi-transparent, like a dirty white opal, without any play of colours, but sometimes a little brilliancy at one end.

There is another kind of shell in this latitude which produces pearls of fine quality, but generally not of great size. The largest I have seen are about the size of a pea; they are perfectly round, and of a golden colour, very lustrous. This is a shell similar to an oyster. The underside is always firmly amalgamated with the rock, so as to form part of it, and cannot be broken off; the upper valve is like a lid, with a very strong hinge. These shells are not found in congeries, but detached, which causes them to be somewhat scarce.

Since the preparation of dried cocoa-nut superseded the manufacture of cocoa-nut oil, these two remote communities, of Manihiki and Rakahanga, have, for the following reasons, in a great measure refused to trade with the few vessels that have visited them:—While the American whalers frequented their neighbourhood, they were in the habit of buying from these islanders great quantities of cocoa-nuts for sea stock. The price was always one dollar per 100 (*i.e.* its equivalent in trade); it takes 50 of them—that is, the common wild cocoa-nut of the Pacific—to make one gallon of oil; consequently, for a gallon they usually asked and obtained half a dollar, represented by two yards of cotton print. One hundred cocoa-nuts, when dried, weigh only 50 lbs. for which traders usually refuse to pay, upon the spots where the nuts are grown, more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ cent per lb. equal to 75 cents per 100 nuts, instead of one dollar per 100, which these islanders have been accustomed to regard as a fair price. As much more as they can get, but no less, has been their rule. They do not allow for the fact that drying cocoa-nuts involves less labour than making them into oil. Time and a little work they regard as of no consequence. Without it, they would be idle; so it is for the cocoa-nuts they seek to be paid. The little toil connected with the affair is to them mere pastime. Thus they sell to one man as readily and for the same price the oil of 100 nuts, after all the labour of peeling, breaking, scraping, and pressing, as they do to another the 100 nuts just as they have been shaken from the tree. They are just as well satisfied whether they sell the nut in its husk, without taking any more trouble with it than to pick it up and throw it into the ship's boats, or extract the oil and sell that, so long as 100 nuts returns them two yards of print or a pound of tobacco. Neither do they understand the principle that all men of business allow their customers a reduction on taking a large quantity. A man who will purchase from them 100 tons of cocoa-nuts will receive from them no more favourable terms than he who would buy of them only 100 nuts.

Thus these two islands have come to be regarded by the few traders who did formerly resort to them as places where nothing is to be got. The natives, they say, "have become indolent, and won't work now like they used to." This is a mistake. These two islands, poor as they may be at present from the traders' point of view, would constitute a veritable mine of wealth to any merchant of enterprise who would establish a settlement upon either of them. Thus, a European acquainted with the language and habits of the natives, buys from them one of their detached islets; the trees upon it may produce, perhaps, 20 or 30 tons of kobra in the year. Whatever the quantity may be, he sells it *ostensibly* to the ship which is sent to visit him, at the price it is desired the natives shall adopt as their standard. They say, "It pays the white man, and so we should be satisfied; let us do the same as the white man." I have seen this plan tried elsewhere repeatedly, and never knew it to fail in the remote coral islands. A European domesticated among the natives, and exhibiting before them persistently an example which they perceive to be in any degree to their advantage, never fails to bring them round to his way of acting; and by such means, combined with the judicious exercise of a little liberality, the 800 or 900 inhabitants of Manihiki and Rakahanga could within a year be rendered, in fact, if not in appearance, the willing workmen of the merchants who purchased their produce, who in reality would exercise as much power as though they, and not the aborigines, were the veritable lords of