

neighbours commonly go in for the same kind of investment. One very good way of "heaving a sprat to catch a mackerel" is to present to the chief or great Panjandrum of the settlement, a sample of whatsoever stock you desire most especially to get rid of. The distinguished personage is certain to wear it in public, and the people to buy the like from the force of example. Although on most of the semi-civilized islands of the Pacific, articles of dress, ornament, and domestic comfort are the commodities most in demand, there are other groups where kobra and pearl-shell are obtainable, and where fire-arms, swords, and other weapons, are required in exchange. In such cases enormous profits are frequently made; thus, in 1871, Mr. Vogleman sold to the King of Apiang a 4-lb. iron gun (which had been put into his vessel as ballast) for 30,000 dried cocoa-nuts, of which the value in the islands was 300 dollars (£60). The piece of ordnance itself was intrinsically worth £1, the price of old iron, it being thickly coated with rust, and honeycombed to a degree which rendered it very dangerous to discharge. At the same time his Majesty bought a quantity of gunpowder at a rate corresponding to five dollars per lb., and a number of lobster cans filled with scrap iron, at a proportionately high figure.

Near about the same date, Captain Hayes sold to the people of Huahine a 9-pound gun, upon a slide, for 1,000 dollars' worth of cocoa-nut oil and oranges; and swords at twenty dollars each, which had been bought from Spence Brothers, of Melbourne, at half-a-crown!

On some islands where cocoa-nut is dried in great quantities, such as the Kingsmills and Mulgraves, the natives, who are a low type of savages, exhibit no desire for any articles of barter beyond knives, tomahawks, blue beads, and tobacco. This last they have been used to obtain from Sydney traders; it is of the description known as "sheepwash," of a very vile kind, inasmuch as they have been known to retail it to white men at 1s. per lb. It was quite of a similar character of excellence to a brand of gin which a year or two back was being retailed in the islands at 9s. per case of 15 quart bottles. It was known by the name of "chain lightning," and in flavour and aroma resembled that methylated spirit which in Australia is distilled out of gum timber in charcoal factories. This delectable elixir was brought to the islands by a New Zealand trader, but what city of the Southern hemisphere could claim the credit of its manufacture is one of the mysteries which will probably never be solved in this world.

The process of the manufacture of kobra is of the simplest kind. The best is that which is dried whole in the nut. For this purpose nothing is necessary but a large house or shed in which to stack the nuts. They must be placed upon a floor or stage to prevent them from touching the ground, else they will not dry but grow. The husk must not be removed, otherwise the eye in the end would be attacked by the "Kalulu," a sort of cockroach, for the sake of the water they contain; and the air being admitted to the interior, the kernel would at once begin to decay. If unpeeled and kept off the ground, in three months the water has disappeared and the kernel has become of a consistency like leather, in which state it will keep for ever, undergoing no change either from the effects of climate, damp, or other cause. This is the best of kobra, makes the clearest and the sweetest oil, and does not diminish in weight by evaporation. When thoroughly dry, which is easily found out by shaking the nut, the husk is stripped off, the shell is broken, and the kernel cut in pieces, so as to prevent its taking up too much room.

The other system is that of drying the nuts in the sun, which, if pursued carefully, makes good kobra, although never equal to that which has been dried in the shade, for the reason that, in the former case, the water which the nut contains is evaporated suddenly, and so not always effectually, in the latter gradually and perfectly. The usual practice is to skin the nuts, break them in two halves, throw out the water, and lay the broken pieces out on the hot coral beach to dry, which, in fine weather, will occupy about three days; but they must be taken in or covered up at night, and in case of a shower of rain, immediately protected from it, as kobra which has been rained upon will not keep, but always turns mouldy after a time, and will infect and spoil all the rest with which it comes in contact. Another singular fact in connection with this process (and for which it is not very easy to account) is as follows:—It frequently happens that a long spell of cloudy or damp weather takes place at a time when a quantity of kobra is being sun dried. To counteract the mischief created by the damp, it has been the practice of very many to make fires under stages, and so complete (as they supposed) the drying process by artificial heat. In such a case the kobra invariably breeds animalculæ, which within a few months will entirely consume it, and spreading to any other and better sample which may be stored in its neighbourhood, will destroy that in like manner.

Upon some islands, where the natives have become partially civilized, they decline to manufacture dried cocoa-nut, for the reason that, having been accustomed to sell their nuts to whaling and other ships at a dollar per hundred, they find that when converted into kobra they do not amount to that value. The fact is that in doing a trade they do not understand the principle of making a reduction in favour of regular customers who are prepared to deal with them periodically for large quantities of their produce.

On the same grounds they choose rather to make oil than kobra, although the oil trader pays them no more for the product of 100 cocoa-nuts than the whaleman gives them for the nuts themselves without the labour of peeling, breaking, scraping, and squeezing which is necessary to make the oil. As the trade increases they will perceive what is most obviously to their interest in this respect, and the manufacture of cocoa-nut oil by the old primitive method will become a thing of the past. One circumstance is tending greatly to enlighten them upon this point, which is, that upon very many islands Europeans or Americans have established themselves, and acquired possession of cocoa-nut groves, of which they devote the whole produce (with the exception of what they require for their own subsistence) to the preparation of kobra. These men do all their work with their own hands, or with the assistance of indigènes, to whom they pay wages. In many cases they have invented improved appliances for the better and more speedy attainment of their object. Thus, in the ordinary manner of spreading out the broken cocoa-nuts upon the sand, it requires from three days to a week of dry hot weather to convert them into a good sample of kobra. In addition to this is the constant necessity to watch lest a chance shower of rain should render the material unsaleable, as likewise the great trouble of collecting it and putting it under cover at night. To avoid this extra labour the white men engaged in the business construct a large shed with a roof of palm leaf, quite impervious to rain;