

macerated in water and freed from their oily pulp, yield a fibre something similar in appearance to jute, perfectly white and exceedingly strong, which, although at present seemingly unknown to the commercial world, it is to be expected will not long remain so.

The trunk of the Pandanus tree, at maturity, is hollow like a stove-pipe. The wood is never more than a few inches in thickness, and is absolutely as hard as bone, and so takes the most splendid polish. It is also as tough as whalebone; out of it are made the beautiful bows used by the savages of the equator and the Carolines, of which I believe the like is not to be found elsewhere in the world. One may well imagine with what admiration the English archers of olden times would have regarded such matchless weapons.

But the greatest value of the Pandanus tree consists in its leaves. These are more than a fathom in length, and from two to four inches wide, of a bright green, similar in appearance to the sword grass, having a rib down the centre, and being edged on both sides with a row of sharp prickles. Roofs of houses, sails of canoes, flooring mats, beds, baskets, and, where the Tappa tree is not found, all the clothing of the natives, are manufactured from the leaf. Wonderful and beautiful fabrics are made from it, all plaited by hand, and dyed various colours; waistcloths and sashes white as linen, and so soft that they are worn with perfect comfort on the naked skin; bed coverings, so finely woven that in European houses they have been often used as tablecloths; ponohos and girdles, so highly prized that the chiefs who possess them usually refuse to part with them even for as much as with us would amount to the value of a cashmere shawl.

But it is not in its adaptability to these purposes that the commercial value of this leaf consists, but because it presents one of the most easily obtainable and suitable materials for the manufacture of paper, and, from its extreme cheapness and inexhaustible abundance, will probably supersede all other substances for this purpose. It grows over the whole face of the coral seas, where it may be cut without leave or license, and it requires nothing but steeping in salt water, pounding, and bleaching in the sun to make it as soft and as white as linen rag. At the present time, when the future supply of the raw material for the manufacture is so earnestly debated, the fact of its being so easily and cheaply obtainable becomes a most important question.

#### NO. VIII.—THE TRADE OF THE PAUMOTU GROUP.

In the matter of cocoa-nut oil, the average yield of the Paumotu Group has been for some years past not more than 200 tons annually, equal to 600 tons of kobra or dried cocoa-nut, which is in every respect the more profitable article to deal in, being infinitely less troublesome to manufacture, involving no waste and saving a large area of storage room, inasmuch as the general practice in shipping kobra is to shoot it loose into the hold just as coals or guano. Of course it makes dead weight, but is not counted bad cargo for shifting, and is a great preservative of the timbers of a ship; the oil seems to steam from it, and to thoroughly saturate the pores of the wood. In iron ships which are cemented over the ballast, it is necessary to lay down a thick flooring of plank under the kobra, otherwise the oil penetrates the concrete and destroys its cohesion. A vessel of this class—the “*Cæsar Godeffroy*”—was ballasted with brickwork bound together and levelled with a floor of cement as hard as marble; but it was found after carrying a cargo of kobra that the cement had decomposed and the ballast was all adrift.

Such small vessels as cruise round the islands to pick up cargoes and carry them to central depôts, such as Tahiti, Samoa, Vavao, or Tongatabu, take their kobra in bags for the convenience of transshipment, or in baskets of nikau (cocoa-nut leaf), made by the natives. The price usually paid by the traders for the dried material varies from one to three cents per lb. in goods upon which the usual profit varies from 100 to 300 per cent. Thus, low lines of prints costing from 7d. to 8d. per fathom are retailed at 2s. Shirts which cost in the colonies 15s. per dozen are sold at 6s. a-piece, needles one penny each, and a small reel of sewing cotton 1s. A card of what is called Vandyke braid (an article in great demand in the Islands) costs 7d., and contains 21 fathoms; it is usual to retail it at one real (or 6d.) per fathom! What comes under the denomination of “*manongi*,” that is to say, bergamot, musk, or the like strong scents (of which the Polynesians are intensely fond, and which they consequently buy with the greatest avidity), constitutes a very profitable medium of exchange, inasmuch as in Sydney this article is obtained at 7s. per dozen vial bottles, which it is usual to retail to the barbarians at one dollar each! Combs, looking-glasses, and gilt ornaments command proportionately high prices; and upon fish-hooks, files, and various iron implements, the profits are very great. Cavendish tobacco is in all cases a dollar a pound, and prints, of whatsoever kind, are never sold at less than half-a-dollar per fathom; the superior lines and Turkey red muslin, as likewise Denims and twilled duck, always 75 cents. In the matter of ribbons, dyed feathers, beads, &c., the trader “sticks it on” according to his judgment, regulated by the amount of anxiety to possess these articles exhibited by the natives with whom he may be dealing. A judicious trafficker, on going ashore for the purpose of trade, usually makes himself a perambulating advertisement of his own goods, thus: He puts on a pair of trousers of precisely that kind he is most anxious to sell—a shirt of some gaudy colour or “flash of lightning” pattern, round his waist he winds a crape sash or piece of handkerchief of imitation silk, he wears a felt hat with a huge buckle and a great bunch of dyed feathers of the most gorgeous description, his ears are pierced and loaded with gilt rings, round his neck are wound several yards of ribbon, strings of beads, chains, &c., and his clothing is saturated with bergamot, verbena, or some similar perfume: as by these kinds of strong scents the Polynesians are as irresistibly attracted as rats are by that of aniseed, or dogs by the odour of a red herring. Thus attired, regardless of expense, he is looked upon as a sublime personage, and marches up the village street escorted by a dense crowd of simple islanders bursting with admiration, pushing and “scrouging” to get a nearer view of his gorgeous habiliments, influenced by much the same feelings with which the ladies of London regarded the Persian Shah.

Each article of his dress or ornament is separately criticised, and when informed that any one of these splendid things can be purchased so cheaply—only a basket or two of kobra or a few calabashes of oil, they become wild with excitement and rush off to collect their produce so as to be in time, lest the stock of valuables should be soon exhausted. Once get Kanakas to fancy a thing, and they are not particular what they have to pay for it; furthermore, when one man buys a thing all his friends and