

I.—Trade and trading arrangements: Mr. Sterndale.

cleaning the shell before shipment. To accomplish this object the more readily, the traders were used to throw them out upon the sandy beach of the islands where they were obtained and let them lie for a day or two in the hot sun, the effect of which was that all the rough edges, knots, and coral lumps which were attached to them cracked off and left them smooth, but at the same time destroyed the splendid natural lustre which they would otherwise have retained had they been placed under cover immediately the living fish had been removed from them. The Manila fishers were always aware of this fact, and profited by their knowledge, in consequence of which their shell has for many years back commanded, in England and elsewhere, £120 per ton, when Tahitian was quoted at £40, although in reality there was no difference in the two samples as regards species, nor would have been in quality had equal care been taken of them both. The bulk of the Manila shell was not, and is not now, derived from the Indian Archipelago, but from the Pacific, that is to say, from Hogolen, Lugunor, Nuguor, and other great islands of the Caroline group, and is the same oyster which is found over the whole Pacific, on all islands possessing the conditions necessary to its existence.

Some idea of the value of such deposits may be gathered from the fact that, according to returns published by the Government of India, the value of a pearl bank in the Straits of Manaar, of two miles in circumference, with a depth of seven fathoms or thereabouts, is estimated at from £35,000 to £40,000 purchase, subject to the royalty demanded by the Government. The shell lies very thick there, more so than is usual in the Pacific; but when we consider that in the latter case many lagoons are to be found from twelve to twenty miles in diameter, wherein, so far as the shoal water extends, it is not possible to look over the side of the boat without seeing shell on the bottom ready for collection, and with neither dues, royalties, nor purchase-money to pay, it is very obvious that there is a great deal of money to be made.

With respect to the value of low coral atolls and lagoon islands, the time is at hand when they will all become the property of traders, in many cases men of limited means, who will enlist in their service or altogether take the place of the aboriginal inhabitants. In other instances, small groups of isles lying contiguous to one another will be monopolized by companies, who will work upon a gigantic scale; they will plant new cocoanut groves, thin out and improve the old ones, and bring the savages into subjection, not on the principle of brute force, but by the substitution of a reign of reason, mutual advantage, comfort, and contentment, for barbarism and brutality. They will erect kobra mills, with powerful machinery, for the manufacture of oil, and apparatus for the preparation of the valuable fibres which now grow wild upon the coral cays, and which, though as yet altogether unknown to the commercial world, are nevertheless of such enduring strength that a fishing-line—as twisted from them by the fingers of the savages, and only of the diameter of a common whipcord—will sustain a weight of several hundreds of pounds without starting a strand.

Any one such company working upon a large scale, and intrusting the conduct of their operations to energetic, conscientious, and experienced men, will produce in ten years more practical good in enlightening the dark places of Polynesia than could be effected by mission ships in as many generations, forasmuch as, if we ever hope to elevate the moral status of barbarians so as to produce any enduring result, we must begin by appealing to their interest and improving their physical condition, creating in their minds a desire for the comforts, and even luxuries, which are inseparable from the higher life of the civilized races; and showing them how by persistent and pleasant industry, and by utilizing the products which Providence has placed within their reach, they may supply all these wants, and add to these comforts hitherto unknown. Do first what is most obviously necessary to advance the condition of the outward man; moral regeneration will assuredly follow. Did not Christ himself begin by administering to the bodily necessities of his hearers, bidding them afterwards repent and believe his gospel? Or, to use a more homely example, how was it with the Irish pauper, who, having been admitted into an institution for the relief of the destitute, was presently caused to sit down upon a bench, and presented with a copy of "The Sinner's Friend"? "Faith!" said the casual, "it's not tracts I want, but sausages and tay."

It is enough to say that companies of merchants, acting upon principles of justice and benevolence towards the aborigines among whom they establish their stations throughout the Pacific, will not only materially assist the cause of human progress, but will themselves reap a golden harvest out of their enterprise.

To make this apparent to the simplest comprehension, we will premise that one mile square of cocoanut trees, such as cover the low coral isles of the Pacific, produces during every year an average of 200,000 cocoanuts. This estimate is made by calculating the produce of every tree at twenty-five nuts a year, which is far below the yield; and by allowing the trees to run, say, 40 feet apart, which they do not, each nut will average half-a-pound, of which (when dry) the market value in the Pacific is one cent. Thus fifty tons of kobra (as the dry material is called), of a value of £400, is produced yearly by a mile square of wild and uncultivated trees. One willing labourer can perform in one day of six hours all the work of gathering, carrying together, peeling, and breaking four hundred cocoanuts; and, as they are ripe at all times of the year alike, there is no season of enforced idleness, but the work may go on continuously. Thus two industrious white men (and white men accustomed to this work can perform it as skilfully as Polynesians), working only two hundred and fifty days out of the year, and then only, if they choose, in the cool of the day, can, off a mile square of wild trees, earn to themselves 16s. each per day for those days which they work, or £400 per annum between them. Very handsome wages for men requiring no capital to start upon, unless it were a few axes and the like implements, a few casks of biscuits, a boat, and some hog! But if they can afford to employ labour to assist them, and go systematically to work to clear away and burn the underwood, and to heap the ashes and other débris about the roots of the palms, as well as to plant new groves, their profits become rapidly and greatly increased. After a year of such treatment the yield of their groves would be augmented fourfold, and in ten years the value of their produce would amount annually to from £3,000 to £4,000, although this seemingly large return does