

to sell as well as to buy—peddlers, native jewellers, artificers in wood and stone, bazaar-keepers, shrewd-faced Yankees, stumbling into this remote village Heaven, and they alone know how or why, with cheap gimcracks that are displayed side by side with the marvels of oriental handiwork.

A NETWORK OF NARROW STREETS SPRING UP,

unnamed, un paved, wallowing in filth that steams in the blinding sunlight, lined



THE MAIN STREET OF MARICHUKKADAL. A MONTH BEFORE THE FISHING THIS PLACE WAS A BARREN WASTE.

with booths and hovels where grave, turbaned men sit behind their outspread wares. From bazaars, going night and day in full blast, come the throb of drums, the clash of cymbals, and the shrill minor plaint of reeds, rhythmic, monotonous, barbaric. Here a pearl-driller, his ebony body shining with sweat, squats with his primitive outfit, piercing pearls that are to be strung; here an inlayer, with his little charcoal forge, is gravely tapping with his blunt-nosed mallet; yonder a man in shabby European clothes

vile snails; and over it the copper sun is shikng into the western sea, turning to orange the sails of the hordes of chunky, sturdy little boats that are stranded on the beach or from far and near are scattering into harbour.

For at midnight the fleet will start for the pears, that with the first light the divers may begin work. So, as the sun goes down, the uproar on the beach increases. The kottins—thatched ware-houses, surrounded by close stockades, where the shells are taken from the boats

—are watched warily by officials, that no thief may slip in and conceal himself. The Government boats that are to convoy the fishing-fleet are getting up steam. On the beach fires are blazing, and groups, gathered around huge kettles of goat's flesh and rice, are silhouetted blackly against the leaping flames. Eating is an important business to-night; for to-morrow will be an enforced fast day. No diver who knows his business will take food on the day of diving — unless the hours are to be very late—that the action

But, contrary to popular belief, and even to native superstition, divers run small danger from these tigers of the sea. Sharks are notorious cowards; and un-

divers, and each diver is allowed two mandaks, or assistants. Each boat carries also a Government guard, whose duty it is to see that the precious bi-



FROM ALL THE EAST COME MERCHANTS, HAWK-EYED AND SWARTHY.

less a man is wounded or rendered somehow helpless, a vigorous splashing is usually sufficient to drive them off. For all that, and because old beliefs are hardest of all to kill, each charmer has his circle of devotees waiting for the touch and the muttered word that will mean protection.

Somewhere around midnight the fleet gets under way, in dire and shrieking confusion, which the Government boats make gallant and perfectly hopeless attempts to quell. But for all the mad excitement, surprisingly few casualties occur.

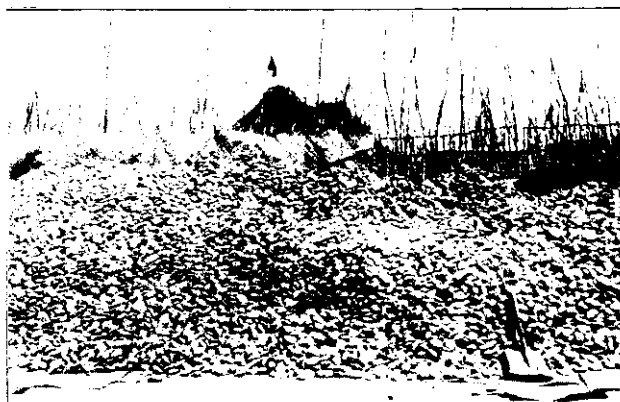
DAWN COMES WITH A FLAMING RUSH:

a burst of crimson far-flung over the sleeping waters, and the sun is striding

valves, lying in their tens of thousands, are not tampered with.

THE METHODS OF DIVING ARE MANY.

Here a stocky little Japanese, naked save for a narrow strap around his waist, slips his feet foremost into the water, two netted bags slung to the strap, with a weight in each bag to take him down. His mandaks hold the rope attached to his belt by which at his signal they will haul him up with his load of shells. The water closes quietly over his round, black head; there is nothing spectacular in his performance, but all through the working hours he will go popping up and down like a Jack-in-the-box, every two minutes, regular as clockwork, blow-



OYSTERS IN THEIR TENS OF MILLIONS YIELD UP THEIR SLUGGISH SPARKS OF LIFE.

up the sky. Twenty miles out at sea the fleet heaves to, hovering over the chosen ground, and when the sun comes, the work begins. Pearl shells live at depths of from eight to twenty or more fathoms; for the naked native diver, twenty to thirty feet is good diving, and forty to fifty feet is the maximum. He can remain under water from sixty to eighty seconds; in this time he must make his descent and ascent, and fill with shells the netted bag he carries slung around his waist. In diving-dress, which is the method employed by Australians, a man can, of course, descend to greater depths, and, when at right to fifteen fathoms, can remain at the bottom for two hours or more, but at any greater depth, for no longer than fifteen minutes. Diving as a profession is dangerous, not so much from the chances of accidents, though these must always be reckoned with, as from the fact that it is ultimately most injurious to health, deafness and ineffectual paralysis resulting if the work is not given up in time.

ing like a porpoise as he rises to the surface, but remaining only long enough to be relieved of his load of shells. Here an elderly Malay, lean and wrinkled, runs outlike on the springboard that reaches out from the boat's side, and goes over with a splash. He, too, has his weighted bags, and a rope. A young Arab pushes through the crowd to the boat's rail, a lithe, clean-limbed fellow, powerfully built, and taller by half a head than most of his mates. He leaps to the rail and poises there, a living statue of bronze.

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The boundary of the area to be fished over is marked out by Government launches, and a heavy line is the penalty of the boat that fishes beyond it.

The work is in charge of the Superintendent of the Fishery, whose tug must be in as many places at once as is possible. Each of the hundred odd boats scattered over the banks within the prescribed limits carries twenty or thirty



A RAGGED LITTLE BROWN VILLAGE — A BARTERING-PLACE FOR PEARLS.

is trying to sell a trayful of jangling alarm clocks to a group of chattering, curious blacks. Government men in puttees and pith helmets; divers, and boatmen—Arabs, Malays, Japanese, Chinese—they throng and gibe and chatter. It is the East, the gorgeous, changeless, mysterious East, the filthy, squalid, verminous East, of strange perfumes and

of the heart and lungs may not be interfered with and the danger of cramps may be reduced to a minimum.

Farther away from the groups around the fire are other smaller groups, clustered close around the hawk-charmers, the pillal karas, in whose power the native believes implicitly, and whose spell will ward off the danger of being eaten alive.



THE MANDAKS LADEN WITH BASKETS OF SHELLS WHICH THEY TAKE TO THE KOTTINS.