

the affinities traceable between primitive and modern arts and customs.

Among the productions of nature employed as materials for ornament and use, scarcely any have commanded more universal acceptance than the shells which abound, under such varied forms, on every sea coast, as well as in the deposits of fresh-water lakes and rivers. To the Conchologist they present an interesting and singularly beautiful department of nature, inviting to research amid their seemingly endless forms, and to inquiry into the habits of the "living will" that once tenanted each lovely cell :—

Did he stand at the diamond door
Of his house in a rainbow frill?
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
A golden foot or a fairy horn
Thro' his dim water-world? *

To the geologist the shells of the testaceous mollusks offer a department in palæontology of very wide application and peculiar value. They constitute, indeed, one of the most important among those records which the earth's crust discloses, whereby its geological history can be deciphered. But to the ethnologist and the archæologist also, they have their phases of interest, not unworthy of attention.—The mere beauty and variety of many marine shells sufficiently account for their selection as ornaments, or objects specially prized by their possessors, whether civilized or savage. These, indeed, constituted at first the sole attraction to the most intelligent collector, when enriching his cabinet with rare and costly shells, and laying the foundations for the science of conchology. To him these coveted treasures were each only "a thing of beauty," or, as in the French title of Knorr's celebrated work : "Les Delices des Yeux et de l'Esprit." But the conchologist is not singular in this respect. Other sciences besides his have had their origin in the mere aimless cupidity of the collector, which has thus amassed the materials wherewith to build a new temple to truth.

Like the precious metals, shells have been used, both in the old and new world, not only for ornament, but as a recognised currency. Of such the *cypræa moneta* is the most familiar. The cowrie shells used as currency are procured on the coast of Congo, and in the Philippine and Maldivé Islands. Of the latter, indeed, they constitute the chief article of export. On the Guinea coast, and through-

* Tennyson's Maud.