

In America the fishery has chiefly been confined to the Gulf of Mexico and to the eastern coast of California; in the Gulf, the principal places were the arm of the sea between Cabagua and Coche, and the mouth of the river de la Hachia. The Isles de las Perlas, in the Gulf of Panama, also received their name from their furnishing pearls. All these places formerly supplied large quantities, and they were fished by the natives before their discovery by the Europeans; but the beds now appear to be exhausted, and the produce is now scarcely worth any thing.

Asia is more exclusively the land of pearls, and the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean are the chief places of their production. Asia still furnishes the great majority of the pearls worn in Europe.

Some attempts have been made to produce pearls artificially; we do not mean by this to express the manufacture of mock pearls, which has been brought to a high pitch of perfection, but to cause by means of art the growth of pearls in fish. This the Chinese are said to carry into effect with success, by making small beads of mother-of-pearl, which they thread upon fine silk and fasten within the shells of pearl oysters when they rise to the surface of the water in the beginning of summer; the fish are then replaced in their beds, where the beads are soon covered with calcareous excretions from the body of the animal, and do in fact become genuine pearls. The experiment has been tried in Europe, and it has proved that the fish may thus be compelled to produce pearls; but in the majority of instances the attempt has destroyed the animal, and even when it has succeeded the produce has been of inferior quality. Linnæus communicated to the Swedish government a plan having the same object, which he had formed from the observation that a variety of parasitical animals were frequently found fastened to the shells of the pearl mussel, and that these little creatures sometimes pierced holes through the shells, within which a pearl was often found: his proposition was to imitate this process, by piercing little holes through the shells when fresh caught, and again to deposit them in their original beds. The experiment was tried, but did not succeed.

A good pearl should be either globular or pear-shaped; according to Jeffries, a celebrated jeweller, "their complexion must be milk white, not of a dead and lifeless, but of a clear and lively hue, free from stains, foul spots, specks, or roughness." He condemns all coloured pearls although the Hindoos prefer a yellow tinge, and some nations admire the red. He values them according to their weight, in the following manner:—a pearl of one carat (three grains and one-fifth) is valued at eight shillings; one of two carats at four times that amount; one of three carats at nine times, and so on in a square proportion, multiplying the number of carats by itself, and the product by eight shillings; but the price set upon some pearls of ancient days exceeds this estimate enormously; and even now a pearl of very extraordinary beauty would most probably receive a valuation upon other grounds than its weight.

We shall conclude with a list of some extraordinary pearls mentioned by old authors, and of one or two of modern times.

First, the often-mentioned pearls of Cleopatra, one of which that celebrated queen drank dissolved in vinegar, whilst the other, saved from a similar fate, was slit into halves to form ear-rings for the statue of Venus in the Pantheon.

Julius Cæsar presented to Servilia a pearl valued at six million Sesterces, or nearly 50,000*l.* of our money.

A pear-shaped pearl from Panama was presented to Philip II. of Spain in the year 1579, of the size of a pigeon's egg; it was valued at 4000*l.*

The pearl belonging to the Shah of Persia, seen

by Tavernius in 1633, was valued at 23,000 tomans, equal at that time to double the number of pounds sterling. This pearl is believed to be the one which was in the possession of the late king of Persia, Fatch Ali Shah.

A pearl presented by the republic of Venice to Soliman, the emperor of the Turks, was valued at 16,000*l.*

The large pearl in the crown of the emperor Rodolph II. weighed 80 carats, and was the size of a pear. (?)

Pope Leo X. bought a pearl of a Venetian jeweller for the sum of 14,000*l.*

A lady at Madrid in the year 1603 wore an American pearl which cost 31,000 ducats.

A large Java pearl, curiously set, was shown at Madras a few years ago. It was made to represent a siren, or mermaid, dressing her hair; the body was formed of the pearl, which was of a long oval form and beautifully pure white; the head and arms were of white enamel, and the lower extremity, forming the fish, of green enamel. The whole was finely carved, and on the girdle were the following words:—"Fallunt aspectus cantusque syrenis."

The most beautiful pearl known is in the museum of Zosima in Mosco; it weighs very nearly 28 carats; it is perfectly globular, and so beautifully brilliant that at first sight it appears transparent. It was bought by Zosima at Leghorn, of a captain of an East India ship. This splendid pearl, which has been named the Pellegrina, is one of the objects of a visit to Moscow.

ADMONITION TO THE RICH.—One of the tests of faith of Christians is, that we should give our money to our needy brother, and not *trust in riches* for "tomorrow;" saying, "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things—O ye of little faith!" Jesus further saith—"How hard is it for them that *trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God!" Some conclude from this text that it is not wrong to possess money, provided we do not trust in it; and, therefore, get as much as they can, endeavouring to persuade themselves that they do not trust in it; whilst every needy brother's unheeded supplications are registered in heaven, as tests that the truth is not in them, and will be unfolded in the day of retribution, when they may hear the Condemnator's words "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these, ye did it not unto me." Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, *how dwelleth the love of God in him!* If Christians would exercise more vigilance over the flock, and remonstrate with those who heap up treasures to themselves, and yet have a place amongst them, urging the impossibility of serving God and mammon, and warning them that they should have faith to dispense these freely to the poor and needy, many a misguided wretch would be saved from the hands of the public executioner; and then would it be demonstrated to the powers of this world, that the true way of preventing crime is "to overcome evil with good," by teaching the ignorant, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked. Hence, in whatever country a gibbet is found, we see a monument which marks the degraded state of the morals of all classes of society—the deficiency of salutary laws—the depravity of the national government—the paramount negligence of the religious world; nor is it less evident, that the blood of every man who suffers capital punishment, in some measure, rest upon the heads of the rich and faithless professor of Christianity.—George Pilkington, late Captain, corps of Royal Engineers.