

friend, and such friendly offices as you are so willing to accord I cannot expect at her hands. Now, have I not convinced you? Even if I have failed in my arguments, oblige me first for your kindness' sake. Don't let it be known that you ever saw or heard of me before, either to Mr. and Mrs. Woodville or Miss Decourcy. Won't you promise?"

"Ah, that name was potent! That word brought with it a flood of remembrances which had for the time, escaped the mind of Algenon Keeting. The fine face darkened and the look of energy and eagerness left it. Keeting gave way.

"It shall be as you choose, Miss Cuthbert," he said, "but it goes hard with me. However, always remember this. Though you have decided that I am to seem only a casual acquaintance, remember that I *am* your friend, and am willing to the utmost to prove it, to you. How I wish you would consent to try me!"

"And so I will, if occasion requires. I believe in you, with all my heart, Mr. Keeting, and all the more so because you have yielded to me in this. But I must go back now. It was a lucky thing my meeting you here, and I have been so glad to see you."

"Oh, must you go in? Why? Am I to meet you in future as a brand new acquaintance, and go through a presentation? What a bore it will be keeping it all up! I dare say I shall break down anyway and ask you to Eleanor's face some day, to lend me the copy of Wallenstein we used to read in together last year. Suppose I did!"

"I should give you the cut direct," said Elizabeth, "I should raise a pair of supercilious eyebrows and say, 'your brother must be given to practical joking, Mrs. Woodville.' Under no circumstances should I own you. But you will not do it."

No, he would not do it—he was as sure of it as herself. Indeed, by now, he had come to see that her plan suited him better than the one he had proposed. Facing the realities that were before him, now that he had time to remember these, he saw that her desire was the thing that was best for both of them.

"Good-by, now," said Elizabeth holding out her hand; "I am not afraid to trust you."

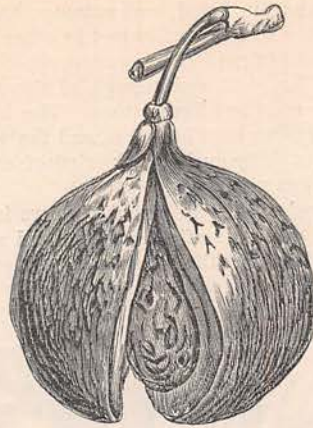
"And I may not walk back with you? Surely, you will permit that."

"By no means," Elizabeth said, "we have a part to play, Mr. Keeting, and that is by no means in keeping with it. Perhaps we may now and then have a chance of a few moments' talk, but it is not probable that these occasions will be frequent, and we must content ourselves with feeling that we are friends, which I assure you is no small pleasure to me." He clasped her hand for a moment, saying as he did so:

"And if the occasions do not come they must be made—but leave that to me. You have said you trusted me, and I shall not betray you."

He loosed her hand then, and lifted his hat, as she turned her back to him and walked away.

(To be continued.)



FRUIT.

The Nutmeg.

BY MRS. C. S. NOURSE.

"In the warm isles of India's sunny sea."



IN the Pacific Ocean, just below the equatorial line, and in the midst of the volcanic region, which extends from the Aleutian Islands to the Moluccas, lies a circle of tiny islets like a necklace of gems in the Banda Sea, and which form, though the smallest of them all, one of the most beautiful, as well as most important groups of the Eastern Indies. They are the islands of Banda, once the rich possession of the Dutch Government. They form a part of the celebrated group of the Moluccas, or Spice Islands, the productions of which have contributed so largely to the wealth of the world. The Moluccas are situated between Celebes and New Guinea. They are chiefly composed of volcanic rock, and several have active volcanoes. The Banda Islands encircle the sea of the same name, and are a series of lofty volcanic mountains interspersed by picturesque valleys, and covered with deep forests of rich foliage.

Lontar is one of the chief of the Bandas, and is distinguished by its picturesque beauty.

The island, upon the north side, is lofty, and presents to the sea a perpendicular wall, from which many radiating ridges descend to the south, where the coast is divided into narrow points, separated by small bays.

An active volcano threatens the island with continual shocks of earthquake, but the inhabitants, having become accustomed to the danger, think little of it, and pursue their usual employments with that indifference which is always engendered by unfulfilled threats.

The volcanic soil is very rich, and from it spring the vast forests of nutmeg-trees, which at one time afforded the only supply of this precious spice to the civilized world. These

beautiful little islands, with their precious treasure of fragrant fruit, safely sheltered by the noble canaris-trees—to whose protection they owe their security from the fierce winds of the tropics—long ago, became to the Dutch traders in these Southern seas, who at the beginning of the eighteenth century held the trade of the East chiefly in their hands, an object of covetous desire. The government having established a colony in the island of Celebes, and possessed themselves of a monopoly of several branches of the spice trade, at that time a luxury so highly prized in England that they sold for enormous prices, a fact which made the trade a tempting prize, not only to the Dutch, but the Spanish and the English, who sought with eagerness a passage to the Indies, that should open to Europe the rich stores of this marvelous archipelago, and the pearl fisheries which lie adjacent.

The trade in nutmegs included that also in mace, which is the enveloping network of the nut, and was, at the time of the monopoly, even more popular as a spice than at the present. The possessions of the colonies also gave the Dutch Government the control of the commerce in cloves, so that the sale of these three valuable spices was entirely in their hands. The methods which they used to retain this monopoly, and the means which they resorted to, to prevent its being infringed, were in accordance with the narrow policy which at that period directed all their foreign trade. In order to understand by what means this policy was frustrated, we must know something of the nature of the fruits in which their wealth consisted.

The nutmeg-tree (*Myristica fragrans*) is closely related to the laurel family, but the genus belongs exclusively to the tropics. All the finer kinds are native in the islands of Asia, though some inferior varieties are found in tropical America, and the name of Jamaica nutmegs is given to the seed of the *Monodora myristica*, a small tree of the West Indies. The fruit of this tree is about the size of an orange, and its numerous seeds have the flavor of nutmeg. Other kinds, the value of which is comparatively small, are found in Brazil, Peru, and even in California, but the true nutmegs of commerce are brought from the East.

The bole of the tree is not large: about a foot from the ground it measures from six to ten inches in diameter. It is graceful and elegant in appearance, throwing up tall sprays often to the height of fifty feet. The leaves are dark, and shining above, and whitish gray beneath, giving great life and variety to its appearance when agitated by a breeze. The fruit resembles a peach in general form, being lobed, though somewhat more elongated, and contains a single seed. When the fruit is quite ripe, the lobes separate and reveal a shining scarlet network, which forms the outer covering of the seed. This is the mace. When taken off and exposed to the air, it loses its scarlet color, and fades to a pale dull orange, such as we see it in the shops. But when first taken from the heart of the fruit, it appears a ball of living scarlet coral, one of the most exquisite creations of nature, revealing here and there in the interstices of

its network, the black, shining shell, which incloses the fragrant nut, protecting it completely from the air, and from the depredation of insects.

The tree has fruit upon it in every month of the year, but there are three harvests. In July and August, the whole fruit is in perfection, and then, of course, is the most valuable harvest. In November, the nuts are not so large, but the mace is thicker. In the last of March or first of April, another fine harvest is obtained. When we learn that the average yield of each tree is five pounds of nutmegs, and a pound and a half of mace, we may form some estimate of the crop of the island of Lontar alone, the trees of which, in 1869, were computed at four hundred and fifty thousand. One-third, however, of this number are non-bearing, the genus being dioecious.

The plantations of trees are called "parks," being rectangular areas, having upon the sides long rows of store-houses and the slight dwellings of the native laborers. Upon the outside of these plantations are planted groves of the gigantic canaris-tree, as we have said, to protect their more delicate and dependent neighbors, securing them, like a great standing army, from the fury of that elemental war which often rages so wildly within the equatorial zone.

These singular trees, towering up in lofty majesty to enormous height, are among the most remarkable of even tropic trees in their mode of growth. The roots spring vertically from the sides of the trunk in great sheets, and these sometimes measure four feet across. Instead of descending immediately to the ground, they wind about for some distance back and forth upon each other before finally descending to the earth, until the mass resembles the folds of some mighty monster coiled about their base.

Groves springing from such an entangled and impenetrable thicket of mighty roots might well form a formidable barrier against man, as well as a shelter from the storm.

When the time for harvesting the nuts has arrived, the outer part of the fruit is taken off and thrown away. The mace is then carefully removed, spread upon shallow baskets made of bamboo, and dried in the sun. When it is quite dry it is ready for the market. It is then packed in small, neat casks of teak—a wood which is extremely hard, and able to resist the attacks of insects even in a tropical climate—and thus shipped.

The nutmeg is not so easily prepared. The nuts are spread on shallow, latticed trays, and placed over a very slow fire, and thus exposed to a gentle heat for three months, until the soft albuminous substance of the interior is shrunk, hardened, and completely separated from the shell, which can be readily ascertained, as it rattles considerably when shaken if perfectly ripe. The thin, crisp shell is then broken and taken off, and the nutmegs packed in teak casks of larger dimensions than those used for the mace, and in these they may be safely transported either by land or sea. The cask bears the name of the plantation where the fruit grew, and the date of its gathering. It would seem as though there were little room for imposition or adulteration; but man

is ingenious in fraud, and nutmegs have undoubtedly been manufactured in other places than Connecticut. They were made of a mixture of flour, oil, and enough of the ground spice to color and flavor them. The ingredients were at least harmless, and the temptation to cupidity during the period of extravagant prices very great.

A species of wild nutmeg grows in New Guinea, which is often gathered and sold by the natives, but they are so much longer and larger than the true nut, that no imposition



FLOWERS OF THE NUTMEG TREE.

can be practiced. They have little flavor or fragrance, even when cultivated, as they have been, in Java and Sumatra.

The fruit is so abundantly produced within the limited area of its habitat, that there could have been little reason for imposition but for the cost of transportation, which, in the infancy of the trade, was immense, owing to the many changes of hands through which it passed. The Dutch Government were afraid of reducing the price by too plentiful production, and so restricted the cultivation of the trees to a very small portion of the area in which it might have been successfully carried on. Of all the Presidency of Banda, extending over a greater part of Ceram, the southwest coast of



NUT ENVELOPED
IN MACE.



HALF OF NUT,
SHOWING THE SHELL.

New Guinea, and many other islands, planting was restricted to the Banda group, and of these to four islands only. Every possible effort was made to carry out their tyrannous regulations, wars were made upon the neighboring colonies and islands, and in treaties of peace with other nations it was stipulated that every nutmeg-tree within their boundaries should be destroyed, and they even went so far as to burn immense numbers of the nuts of their own

plantations, for which they could not command a market: and this might well happen, since the crop often amounted to from four to five hundred thousand pounds of nutmegs, and 140,000 pounds of mace. With their very limited and expensive methods of transportation, the market was of course necessarily limited also.

But nature is seldom favorable to a contracted and ungenerous policy. The Banda Islands were visited by large numbers of pigeons, who so delighted to feast upon the ambrosial mace which incloses the nutmeg that they gained the name of nutmeg pigeons (*carphaga ænea*), a large and handsome race, but somewhat disposed to be gourmands, feeding so plentifully upon their favorite fruit as to become enormously fat, so that when shot they frequently burst asunder on striking the ground. The whole seed of the fruit is swallowed, but only the mace digests, and the nut, inclosed in its hard shell, is voided not only uninjured, but prepared by a process which has been sought to be imitated by art, for germination. Not until many attempts had been made was it found that a lixivium of lime would equally secure germination.

Through the agency of these pigeons, the nutmeg has been planted upon other shores, and, as a modern writer remarks, with great satisfaction, in countries of which the Dutch did not then even know the existence. During the interval between 1796 and 1802, and from 1810 to 1814, the English had possession of the Spice Islands, and the tree was then carried to different parts of the East, and successfully cultivated in the Botanical Gardens of Calcutta. It was introduced also to Mauritius, French Guiana, and the West Indies. Nowhere, however, has it been found to yield so fine or abundant fruit as in the islands which formed its original home in the golden "summer of the world." In the West Indies the tree grows to a large size, but the yield is small and the fruit poor.

Ever since its discovery the nutmeg has been highly esteemed, and is little likely to lose its popularity while men value the pleasures of the table. The use of it is generally considered healthful, and by the Germans it is reckoned to promote digestion, and used as a dressing for cabbage, kale, etc.

In medicine it is accounted a gentle stimulant, and its fragrant and piquant flavor is often used by the apothecary to disguise a distasteful compound.

In approaching by water the islands where it grows, the breeze is loaded with the delightful perfume wafted from the shore, for every part of the plant, the blossom, the fruit, the nut, even the wood of the trunk, is permeated by the aroma which seems an essential part of its life. It is most concentrated, however, in the essential oil which is contained in the kernel of the nut, and in the mace. This the oil is obtained by distilling the nuts with water. Another extract is made in the form of "nutmeg butter," which is composed of the solid fat, also contained in the nut, and is imported to this and other countries in the form of square bricks, and used for making perfume and various other purposes.