

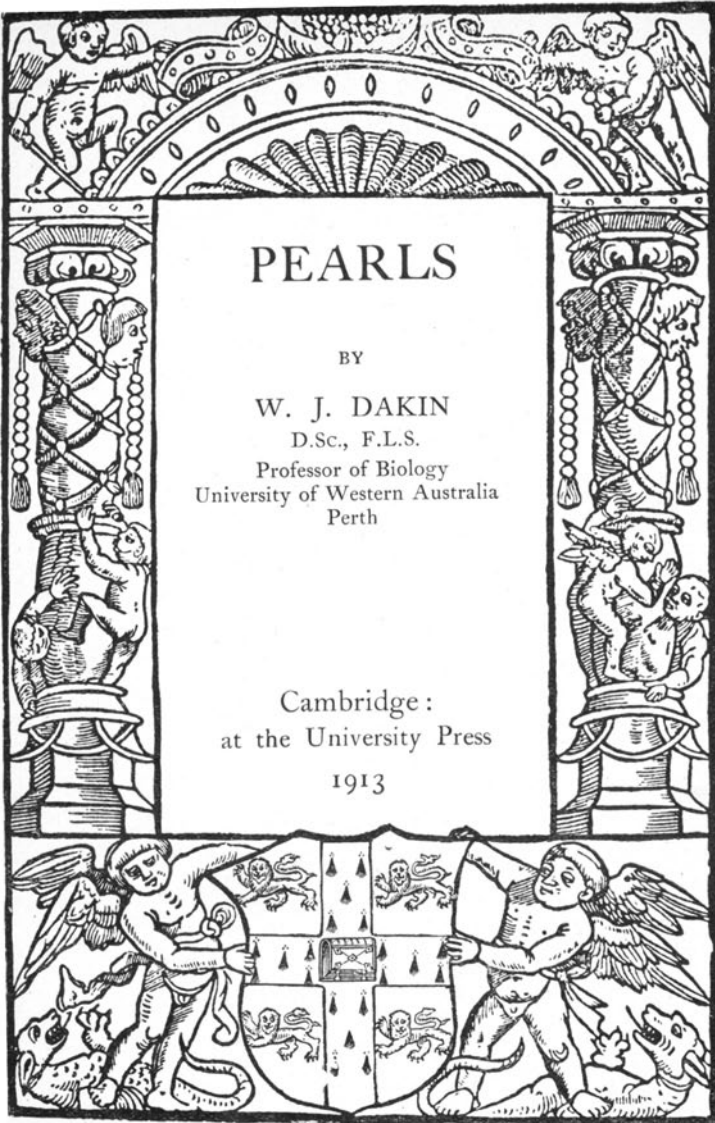
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PREFACE

NO one can be better aware of the defects in this little book than the author. It has been written with a view to giving a summary of the most important facts about pearls, pearl fishing and pearl formation, and it is hoped by the writer that any sins of omission will be pardoned. There is no lack of literature on the subject of pearls, and some of the volumes which have been published on this subject are themselves of great value. They do not seem, however, to be easily within reach of the average reader, and they are nearly always written from non-biological points of view. The works on pearl formation are, on the other hand, usually very technical. The structure and natural history of the shell-fish in which pearls are produced are hardly ever described outside scientific treatises; hence the chapter on this subject. It seemed impossible, to the author, to describe the processes of pearl formation without reference to the structure of the shell-fish. If it were only for common knowledge, a description of the anatomy of a mollusc should be interesting to the general reader, for very little idea of the structure of even an edible oyster or mussel seems to prevail. The book has been written by a biologist, from the point of view of a biologist,

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PREFACE

and owes much to previous writers who have treated the subject from other sides. To Professor Herdman, my former teacher, I owe very much, and his descriptions of the Ceylon banks have been very largely utilised. The writing up has only been accomplished through the assistance rendered by my wife, for by a curious coincidence it had to be written under the stress and strain of preparations for a removal to one of the countries referred to on many occasions in the text, Western Australia. Mr H. Jackson, M.Sc., has very kindly undertaken the labour of proof reading; without this help considerable delay would have occurred in the publication. To Mr Chambers, of University College, London, I owe several interesting references to pearls in the classics; and Dr Johnstone, of Liverpool, has read certain parts of the manuscript.

If I have occasionally fallen into the pitfall of becoming too technical, I trust that my readers will turn to the glossary, and I earnestly hope that it will help to clear up the difficulty.

W. J. D.

R.M.S. *Mongolia*,
Mediterranean.
February 1913.

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