

"THE PALMS OF BRITISH INDIA AND CEYLON."

The volume published under the above title by the Oxford University Press comes from the able pen of Father E. Blatter. Having lived for many years in India he has had exceptional opportunities to study both indigenous and introduced species of the Palm family. This, coupled with a keen interest in the subject, has resulted in the production of a book, useful alike to the botanist and the layman. Much useful information is contained in the volume, well supported by numerous photographs and figures which are a very great help for identification purposes.

The introduction contains much useful information (i) in regard to the Geographic Distribution of *Palmae* generally, (ii) a short history of the exploration of the Palm flora in India together with a detailed account of its distribution and (iii) a general description of Palms couched in popular language.

The remainder of the book is devoted to (i) descriptions, (ii) considerable information concerning the economic value and uses of some species with histories and legends concerning them and (iii) photographs and figures. The descriptions generally, are very good and are set forth in scientific terms. Keys for identification purposes have been utilised in dealing with all genera and to a lesser extent, for the species. The generic keys are of necessity couched in botanical terms. Specific keys have been treated less scientifically, being in most cases based on general characteristics. Similarly, in a few instances the distinguishing features of two species have been contrasted or tabulated side by side. These, together with the many admirable photographs, should be of considerable assistance in the identification of species and will certainly be welcomed by the layman. This work might have been applied with good results to all genera in which two or more species are mentioned. The economic uses and importance of several of the better known species are dealt with in detail, especially in the cases of the Coconut, Betel Nut, and Date Palm. The histories and legends connected with these latter, are mentioned at length and give an interesting insight into the important part played by these plants in the lives of the natives, past and present. Cultivation is briefly touched upon, that dealing with tropical planting being of most value. Considerable work has been put into the compilation of lists of common and local names which should be of considerable use for determination purposes. No review would be complete without mention of the

admirable series of photographs included in the book; they should make identification a much easier matter. These are supplemented by numerous figures dealing with the morphology of flowers, etc., as aids to identification.

The author is to be congratulated on the production of a book useful alike to the botanist and the layman, a by no means easy task.

F. FLIPPANCE.