

THE BOTANY OF CAPTAIN COOK'S
FIRST VOYAGE.

Illustrations of the Botany of Captain Cook's Voyage Round the World in H.M.S. "Endeavour" in 1768-71. By the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Banks and Dr. Daniel Solander, with Determinations by James Britten. Part I.: Australian Plants. 101 Plates, with descriptive letterpress. (London: Printed by order of the Trustees of the British Museum. All Booksellers. 1900.)

"BETTER late than never" may be said of the book the title of which is given above. It is a curious fact that the scientific results of several of the most important and most costly voyages of discovery, both English and foreign, have either not been published at all, or only in part, and in a fragmentary manner. Cook's first voyage is, perhaps, the most notable example of unfinished works of this kind in the history of British exploration. This is the more to be deplored, because collecting and methodical investigation were carried out on a scale previously unknown, and an immense sum was subsequently expended by Sir Joseph Banks in preparing the botanical results for publication. This is not the place to enter into the causes of the cessation of this part of the work; but it was not the only part that was long belated. It was not till 1893 that Captain Cook's own "Journal" was published, edited by Sir William Wharton; and three years later appeared Banks's "Journal" of that memorable voyage, edited by Sir Joseph Hooker. Although I have said "better late than never," it is obvious that the illustrations now in course of being issued have been, to some extent, forestalled, and the letterpress is historically interesting, rather than a contribution to science. According to the prospectus the complete work will comprise 800 plates; these will include a series illustrating the botanical collections of Cook's second voyage, when the Forsters, father and son, were the naturalists. Sydney Parkinson was the botanical artist on the first voyage, but he and the two other artists all died on the voyage, and their work was left in an unfinished condition. So much has been written about the plates now being issued and the desirability of their publication, that something superior to what they really are was probably expected by most people. Indeed it is difficult to suppress a feeling of disappointment. Compared with the botanical illustrations of other expeditions of discovery of a little later date, they are hard and unattractive, and floral dissections are almost entirely wanting. They lose, too, in effect, as they are transfers and not direct impressions of the original engravings on copper. The majority of the plates were engraved from drawings by F. P. Nodder, prepared from Parkinson's sketches and the dried specimens, and only the former name appears on the plates. Our remarks on this point, however, should be regarded in the light of explanation rather than criticism, because after all we must not forget that their publication has been delayed more than a century. Of course, it is highly regrettable that they were not published at the time, so that they might have been more fully utilised in the many publications that have appeared during the last century and a quarter on Australasian and Pacific Islands botany. A fact of great importance is that a comparatively small number of the plants here depicted had previously been figured. Mr. Britten has most con-

scientiously reproduced Solander's descriptions and remarks, even to the extent of palpable errors. Thus the locality Endeavour River is given throughout as Endeavour's River, and "petioli $\frac{1}{2}$ -uncialia," instead of unciales. But perhaps this course is more satisfactory than any attempt at improving the original; and errors of the latter kind may be due to slips of the transcriber. The keenest reader may overlook false terminations in Latin descriptions, and the most ready writer is apt to make them.

On the other hand, our thanks are due to Mr. Britten for much valuable information, and the correction of many current errors. Doubtless when the time comes for the "Introduction," some account will be given of the countries or districts explored, and the botanical results summarised.

With regard to nomenclature, it is fortunate that, although the rule of priority has been strictly followed, there are few suppressions of familiar names; but that is because there were few opportunities. Of course, the familiar names appear, but only as synonyms. Mr. Britten is an uncompromising disciple of the school of reformers, and he has been permitted to exercise his will in this national publication. Thus *Ionidium* becomes *Calceolaria*; and the calceolarias that everybody is familiar with have *Fagelia* for their generic name. *Cosmia* takes the place of *Calandrinia*; *Damapana* that of *Smithia*; and *Caulinia* that of *Kennedyia*. The complications that such changes cause are almost interminable, as the revival of one name may affect half-a-dozen other well-established generic appellations. But this is not the place to discuss the question. Botanists will be thankful to the Trustees of the British Museum for this valuable addition to their pictorial books, which is at the same time a monument to some of the scientific pioneers in British exploration.

W. BOTTING HEMSLEY.

OUR BOOK SHELF.

Fancy Water-Fowl. By F. Finn. Pp. 45. Illustrated. (London: Feathered World Office, 1900.)

MR. FINN, especially to Indian readers, is such a well-known writer on popular ornithology in more than one journal that the reproduction of a series of his articles in book-form can scarcely fail to be welcomed by a wide circle. And in selecting ornamental, or "fancy," water-fowl as a subject, he has hit upon one which appeals to a large number of bird lovers, if for no other reason than the facility with which these handsome birds can be reared and kept in confinement, even when the available space is limited.

The author has confined himself, on the advice of a lady friend, to well-known species, and in the selection he has made he is, on the whole, to be congratulated. We should, however, have liked to see mention made of the so-called Coscoroba Swan of South America, on account of its very peculiar organisation, although we are well aware that, chiefly owing to its delicate constitution, it is seldom seen in European collections.

Both the illustrations and the text have been reproduced in their original guise from the *Feathered World*. With regard to the page plates there is considerable individual variation in their degrees of excellence, the figure of the Spotted-bill Duck, forming the frontispiece, being decidedly superior to that of Rosy-billed Pochards which comes later, the last-mentioned being somewhat coarse