

It was at one time considered impossible to combine high quality and high yield, but it has been shown now, both at Cambridge and at Pusa, that this is not the case. Half a dozen wheats have been bred at Pusa which give high yields of both grain and straw.

The problem of producing strong wheats in India suitable both for consumption in the country and for export to England, and at the same time profitable to the growers, is considered solved. Two shortcomings of the Indian wheats still await improvement. These are want of standing power of the straw and want of rust-resisting power.

At the same time, the producing power of the soil at Pusa has been doubled by hot-weather cultivation (see NATURE, February 17, 1910), by moisture conservation, and by embanking with occasional green manuring. In this way a yield of 40 bushels to the acre has been produced without irrigation or manure.

It remains to be proved that the selected wheats will do equally well in the farmers' hands in other parts of India, and that the methods adopted at Pusa can be applied elsewhere.

E. F. A.

MY TROPIC ISLE.¹

THIS book, which is beautifully illustrated by appropriate photographs, as well as admirably written, is quite above the normal type of its class.

within the area of tropical Australia. It was "an unpolluted isle, without history, without any sort of fame . . . the most fascinating, the most desirable on the coast of North Queensland," when permanent settlement began on September 28, 1897.

The author landed on this tropic isle weighing a little more than eight stone, and in a frail physical state, yet "trees had to be felled and sawn into proper lengths for piles. . . . With blistered and bleeding hands, aching muscles, and stiff joints he persevered." Whilst the house was being built they lived in tents—the "they" standing apparently vaguely, first for the author and a few friends, then, it may be conjectured, for a wife and children. Meanwhile, the Australian blacks they had brought with them obtained fish from the sea coast and killed scrub fowl and pigeons. Gaps in the provender were filled up with tinned meat and bread and jam. Later a small area of forest land and a patch of jungle were cleared for the cultivation of maize, sweet potatoes, and vegetables. Fruit-trees were planted, and have since "been in the ascendant to the detriment of other branches of cultural enterprise."

The gradual emergence of a fairly civilised and comfortable house, of a regularly supplied larder from the wild gifts of nature, from farm and plantation, is quite as fascinating as the opening chapters of "Robinson Crusoe." Then we are made acquainted with the other inhabitants of the isle, insects, such as



FIG. 1.—Umbrella Tree (*Brassaia actinophylla*). From "My Tropic Isle."

It is sufficiently romantic and suggestive of De Foe to avoid very clear geographical indications or maps to show the position of "My Tropic Isle," and one is left to infer that it is an island or islet not far from the coast of northern Queensland, and well

large wasps, which build terra-cotta warehouses in which to store the semi-animate carcasses of grubs; the solitary bees that turn by degrees favourite volumes into a solid block of waxen comb. These and many other insects and spiders are attacked by more or less fantastic lizards, and by bats, "sharp-toothed and with pin-point eyes, swooping in at one door and

¹ "My Tropic Isle." By E. J. Banfield. Pp. 315. (London T. Fisher Unwin, 1911.) Price 10s. 6d. net.

departing at the other, having rapidly garnered their prey from the rafters."

The chapter on "A Plain Man's Philosophy" almost recalls to one the musings of Prospero on a somewhat similar isle; that on "Silences" is worthy of R. L. Stevenson; "His Majesty the Sun" brings home to one the peculiar quality of the climate of northern Australia, which makes that region a country suited to the rearing of a white race, and therefore wholly

of silvery lavender (or rather silver shot with lavender) and outlined with purple—and the great anemone is apparent. If the finger is presented to any part of the latter, it becomes adherent; or if the anemone is not in the mood for food, it curls and shrinks away with a repulsive demeanour. But the beautiful fish on the least alarm retires within the many folds of its host, entirely disappearing, presently to peep out again shyly at the intruder. It is almost as elusive as a sunbeam, and most difficult to catch, for if the anemone is disturbed it contracts its folds and shrinks away, offering inviolable sanctuary. If the fish be dissociated from its host, it soon dies. It cannot live apart, though the anemone, as far as can be judged from outward appearances, endures the separation without a pang.

"However, it is safe to assert that the association between the stolid anemone and the painted fish—only an inch and a half long—is for their mutual welfare, the fish attracting microscopic food to its host. And why should one anemone greedily seize a fish and another find pleasure in the companionship of one of the most beautiful and delicate of the tribe?"

The account of the development of the Bailer shell (*Melo* or *Cymbium*) from "a few drops of translucent jelly—as free from earthly leaven as a dewdrop" to a very large and capacious bowl-shaped shell, emitting egg-clusters sixteen inches long and twelve inches in circumference is most interestingly told. Other chapters of biological value and great literary charm are entitled "Some Curious Bivalves," "Barrier Reef Crabs," "Insect Ways," "Swifts and Eagles," "Socialistic Birds"; besides those which describe Hamed, the pearl-fishing Arab of Jeddah, and the black Australians with their superstitions, their quaint ways and dialect, their fine physical development and naïve charm of manner.

MALARIA IN INDIA.

IT is usual to preach nowadays that plain speaking does more harm than good; but I have reason to believe that some very plain statements which have appeared in *NATURE* and elsewhere on the subject of Indian medical research and sanitation have had a converse effect. It is now a great pleasure to learn from the third number of the quarterly publication of the Government of India, called *Paludism*, that that Government has set aside the sum of 500,000 rupees (about 33,000*l.*) for an Indian

Research Fund to study medical and sanitary problems. No other Government possesses such a magnificent opportunity to add to the common stock of knowledge on such subjects. It rules an immense population; it draws a great revenue; and it is served by hundreds of well-trained medical officers. We are not yet informed as to the details of the allotment, but funds are the sinews of science as of war, and the Indian Government will certainly never regret the step it has taken.

For a number of years past increasingly good scien-

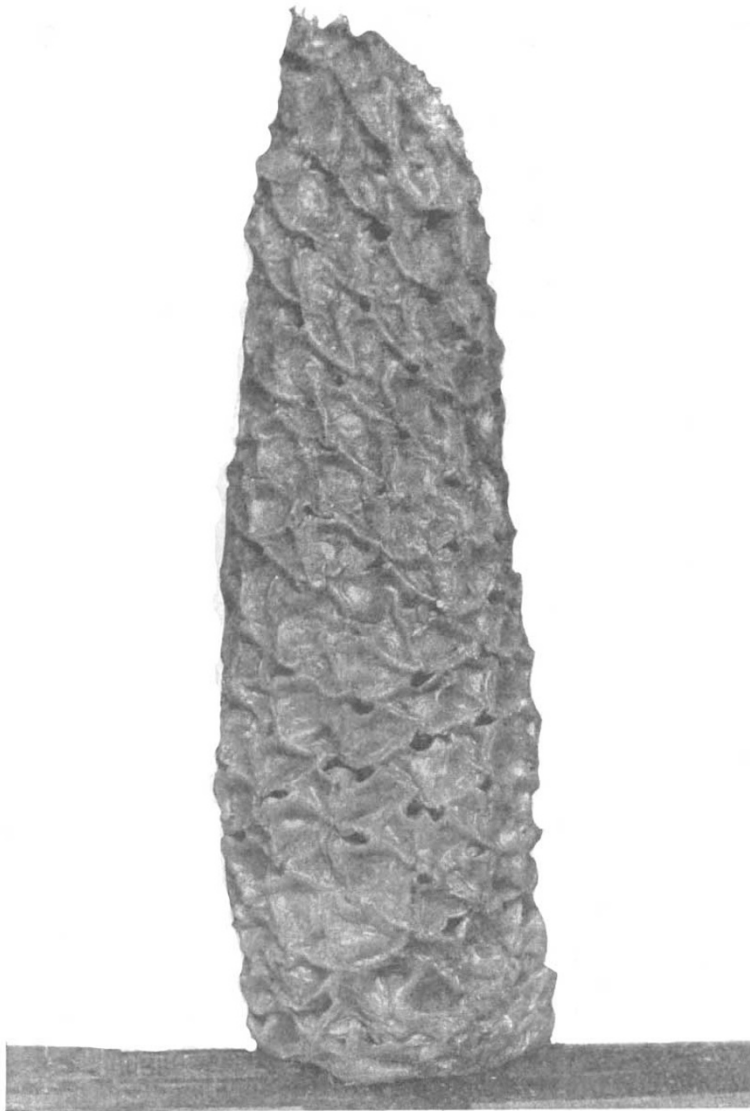


FIG. 2.—Egg Capsules of Bailer Shell. From "My Tropic Isle."

different from the economic conditions of tropical Asia and Africa.

We are told much about sea-worms and sea-cucumbers, marvellous fish, so marvellous, in fact, that if there were not photographic reproductions done from the life to support the descriptions we might think the latter overdrawn. Delightfully described are the interdependent relations between the giant anemone and the painted fish (*Amphiprion*).

"The good fellowship between the dainty fish—resplendent in carmine, with a broad collar, and waistband