

enabling the timber expert to trace the vernacular names to the correct identification of the botanical types, and provides the same advantages to the large number of people who are enthusiastic collectors of useful and ornamental flowering shrubs.

A painstaking and conscientiously accurate description is given of the measurement of the trees, leaves, flowers and fruit, together with the districts in which they abound.

The history of this tropical country is full of romance and interest. Why the Maya peoples settled there, or whence they came seems to be undecided. In the beginning, their fight against Nature and the jungle must have been very severe, but at last they succeeded and established their cities. Then again Nature reasserted herself, and in course of time turned them out.

Gann and Thompson say :

“those cities which were ill situated, from an agricultural point of view, would naturally be the first deserted, while the cities in the fertile lands of north-eastern Peten would be amongst the last.

“Whatever the cause, it is certain that by the third Katun of Bactun 10, or 629 A.D., the whole of the Old Empire was almost completely abandoned, and remained so for the next seven or eight centuries, when reforestation of the lands enabled at least a part of the descendants of the original dwellers to return to the home of their ancestors.”

The same authors inform us that it took 250 years for the Maya to evacuate the land. They state that the reason for the evacuation is not known, but they mention seven possible reasons, of which the sixth is “exhaustion of the soil”. The other reasons are : “1. National decadence. 2. Epidemic disease. 3. Earthquakes. 4. War, internecine or foreign, or both combined. 5. Climatic changes. 7. Religious or superstitious reasons.”

The practice followed by almost all primitive peoples was to cut down the trees and shrubs over one area, and move on after a year or two, repeating the same process in another, which must at last have rendered the whole country barren of trees, so that erosion of the soil would have followed in the same way as in other countries. There seems to be little doubt, therefore, that the sixth reason referred to above, namely, “exhaustion of the soil”, was the cause of the final evacuation.

The romance of this country did not finish with the departure of the Maya. The story of the early British voyagers who visited these far distant countries is fairly well known. Prof. Record informs us that :

“It was at one time the practice of the class of privateers . . . cruising against Spanish traders to set fire to all vessels they captured which might

be laden with Logwood, having first stripped them of everything valuable.

“But it so happened that a Captain James, the master of a letter of marque, having captured a Spanish vessel the cargo of which consisted of this wood, brought the ship and cargo into the Port of London. On endeavouring to dispose of the latter he was gratified as well as surprised to find for it a ready sale at an enormous price per ton. The crew, who had used up a portion of the precious freight to burn in the galley fire, had little idea that they were using fuel at a hundred pounds per ton during the voyage.”

No less romance is attached to the beginning of the trade in mahogany, which is supposed to have begun about 1725. A little later, in 1786, a treaty was made between Great Britain and Spain, which gave the right to British settlers to cut wood “not excepting even mahogany”.

Having regard to the importance and value of this colony, it seems incredible that a recognized forestry service should have been started only in 1922, but with the competent activities of the present Governor, and the Conservator of Forests, good results may confidently be expected. There can be no stronger indication of its importance than the interest shown by the two very well-known authors of the present work—Samuel J. Record and Paul C. Standley. Prof. Record had already provided generous contributions to our knowledge of forests and their products, and this new book comes at a most opportune moment.

ALEXANDER L. HOWARD

Das Tierreich :

eine Zusammenstellung und Kennzeichnung der rezenten Tierformen. Gegründet von der Deutschen Zoologischen Gesellschaft. Im Auftrage der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Lief. 65 : Lepidoptera—Parnassiidae pars 2 (subfam. Parnassiinae). Bearbeitet von Felix Bryk. Pp. li+790. (Berlin und Leipzig : Walter de Gruyter und Co., 1935.) n.p.

THE contents of this extensive work are embodied in the title. It monographs the genera and species of ‘Apollo’ butterflies forming the subfamily Parnassiinae together with their numerous forms of subspecies. In each case, the synonymy is given, followed by a description of the species and form concerned, its distribution and the location of the type specimens. It is profusely illustrated by means of 698 text-figures of the various species, together with structural details of a diagnostic character. The extraordinary range of forms into which the various species are divisible has made the genus a specialized study among lepidopterists. In the case of *P. apollo*, for example, the index alone of the forms of this species runs to five pages of double columns. A detailed and authoritative work of this kind is likely to remain a standard for a number of years.