

is still none immediately at the mouth or on the banks of the Rio Negro. The next rivers, the Curicuriari, the great river Uaupés, and the Isánna, though all black-water, have none; while further on, in the Xié, it again appears. On entering Venezuela it is found near the banks of the Rio Negro, and is abundant all up to its sources, and in the Témi and Atabápo, black-water tributaries of the Orinoco. This seems to be its northern limit, and I cannot hear of its again appearing in any part of the Amazon or Orinoco or their tributaries. It is thus entirely restricted to a district about 300 miles from N. to S. and an equal distance from E. to W. I am enabled so exactly to mark out its range, from having resided more than two years in various parts of the Rio Negro, among people whose principal occupation consisted in obtaining the fibrous covering of this tree, and from whom no locality for it can have remained undiscovered, assisted as they are by the Indians, whose home is the forest, and who are almost as well acquainted with its trackless depths as we are with the well-beaten roads of our own island. The fibre imported into this country has been supposed to be produced only by the *Attalea funifera*, a species not found in the Amazon district. In the London Journal of Botany for 1849, Sir W. Hooker gave some account of the material, and of the tree producing it; stating that he had received the fruit of the tree with the fibre from a mercantile house connected with Brazil, and that the fruit was that of the *Attalea funifera*. This species is mentioned by Martius as furnishing a fibre used for cordage and other purposes in Southern Brazil, and he states that it is called 'piaçaba'; so that the Indian name is applied to two distinct trees producing a similar material in different localities; and the two having been brought to England under the same name and from not very distant parts of the same country, were naturally supposed to be produced by the same tree. The greater part, if not all of the Piassaba now imported, comes, however, from the Rio Negro, where several hundred tons are cut annually and sent to Pará, from which place scarcely a vessel sails for England without its forming a part of her cargo."

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### Notices of Books.

*The Palm Trees of the Amazon and their Uses.* By A. R. Wallace, with 48 plates. 12mo. Van Voorst.—Mr. Wallace has here supplied a most useful practical commentary upon Von Martius' great work on Palms. All appearance of scientific display he has carefully avoided; but has produced instead a series of capital figures of Palms in their natural aspect, after the manner of Blume's clever sketches of Malay Palms, but on a smaller scale. Each plate is accompanied by an account of the habit of the species, of the districts in which it occurs, of its economical uses, and of the marks by which, in cases of doubt, it may be distinguished in the forest from its allies. Upon this point the information collected by the author is particularly useful; as also are the accounts given by him of the purposes to which Brazilian Palms are applicable. In this part of his work he has found errors to correct, one of the more interesting of which is that which relates to the fibre now so largely employed in London in the construction of coarse brooms. We quote Mr. Wallace's account of this valuable species, the *Leopoldinia Piassaba*.

"The fibrous or hairy covering of the stem is an extensive article of commerce in the countries in which it grows. It seems to have been used by the Brazilians from a very early period, to form cables for the canoes navigating the Amazon. It is well adapted for this purpose, as it is light (the cables made of it not sinking in water) and very durable. It twists readily and firmly into cordage, from the fibres being rough edged, and as it is very abundant, and is procured and manufactured by the Indians, piassaba ropes are much cheaper than any other kind of cordage. The price in the city of Barra in June 1852, was 400 reis or 1s. for 32 lbs. of the fibre, and 800 reis or 2s. for every inch in circumference of a cable 60 fathoms long, which is the standard length they are all made to. Before the independence of Brazil, the Portuguese government had a factory at the mouth of the Paduari, one of the tributaries of the Rio Negro, for the purpose of making these cables for the use of the Pará arsenal, and as a government monopoly. Till within these few years the fibre was all manufactured into cordage on the spot, but it is now taken down in long conical bundles for exportation from Pará to England, where it is generally used for street sweeping and house brooms, and will probably soon be applied to many other purposes. It is cut with knives by men, women and children, from the upper part of the younger trees, so as to secure the freshest fibres, the taller trees which have only the old and half-rotten portion within reach, being left untouched. It is said to grow again in five or six years, the fibres being produced at the bases of the new leaves. The trees are much infested by venomous snakes, a species of *Craspedocephalus*, and the Indians are not unfrequently bitten by them when at work, and sometimes with fatal consequences. The distribution of this tree is very peculiar. It grows in swampy or partially flooded lands on the banks of black-water rivers. It is first found on the river Paduari, a tributary of the Rio Negro on its northern side, about 400 miles above Barra, but whose waters are not so black as those of the Rio Negro. The Piassaba is found from near the mouth to more than a hundred miles up, where it ceases. On the banks of the Rio Negro itself not a tree is to be seen. The next river, the Darahá, also contains some. The next two, the Maravihá and Cababurís, are white-water rivers, and have no Piassaba. On the south bank, though all the rivers are black water, there is no Piassaba till we reach the Marié, not far below St. Gabriel. Here it is extensively cut for about a hundred miles up, but there