

Comparing the number of endemic species of the Indian Flora with that of other parts of the world, it is somewhat surprising to discover that it is less than 2 per cent. below the Mexican, and not far below that of the Australian; being no less than 68·67 per cent. But such statistics embrace only one class of facts, the value of which will be briefly discussed in connection with the delimitation of the primary botanical regions.

#### ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOME OF THE LARGEST NATURAL ORDERS.

Attention has already been directed to the illusory nature of mere statistical comparisons of the vegetation of different regions. In many Floras the orders richest in species are not those which give character to the scenery, or constitute the bulk of the vegetation; and the genera are sometimes less numerous and less diversified than those of many concomitant orders less numerous in species. This is pre-eminently the case with the orchids in India. Many of the species are exceedingly rare and local; many are small plants with inconspicuous flowers; and the comparatively small number of common species having large conspicuous flowers, lend colour to the vegetation rather than give character to it, and this only in certain districts. Here and there in the mountains, as we learn from travellers and residents, the rocks are clothed with orchids, and when they are in full flower form a conspicuous feature in the landscape. In South Mexico and Central America orchids, though third in order of predominance, pervade the whole country to a greater extent; yet here, as elsewhere, the existence of the preponderating epiphytic species depends largely on the arboreous vegetation. In Northern and Eastern India and Malaya, as in Mexico, orchids are specially abundant in the intermediate or oak region, and the numerous species of oak constitute one of the principal features in the vegetation. Lower down in the more tropical parts of India arboreous Leguminosæ, Euphorbiaceæ, figs, laurels, Dipterocarpeæ, Anonaceæ, together with Rubiaceæ, Acanthaceæ, Compositæ, Scitamineæ, Aroideæ, &c., constitute the bulk of the vegetation—some of these orders, their genera, or even species predominating in one district, some in another; but each or any of them entering more fully into the composition of the vegetation than orchids. Palms form a conspicuous feature on the coast and plains of India, where the more or less cultivated coco-nut, the palmyra (*Borassus*), and *Phoenix sylvestris* abound and cover large tracts; but there is little variety in the prominent species; and the order occupies the thirtieth position only by reason of the large number of species of rattan (*Calamus*) that inhabit the dense forests, and render them almost impenetrable. Nowhere is there anything resembling the highly diversified palm-groves of the Amazon region.

In Mexico the Compositæ outnumber the order next in sequence by upwards of 100 genera and 500 species, and although few of them exceed the stature of shrubs, they grow in almost every variety of situation; are often excessively numerous individually;