

leaves, and male and female flowers on the same tree; the female flowers at the base of each spadix; a simple 3-celled ovary, which is succeeded by a coarse, fibrous, 1-celled drupe, two of the cells becoming abortive. There are about 18 known species, the most important of which, *C. nucifera*, is found all over the tropical regions; but generally growing within the reach or influence of the sea or salt water, and often taking root on sand-banks or thinly covered reefs, almost directly after they appear above high-water. The tree rises from 60 to 90 feet in height, and affords food, drink, oil, clothing, and shelter to the natives; has a soft, fibrous stem, marked on its bark by rings, produced by the fall of its leaves, two leaves falling off annually; so that the age of a tree can always be told by counting its rings, half the number of the whole giving its age. The top of the tree is always crowned by a plume of from 12 to 15 long leaves, like gigantic ostrich-feathers, about 15 ft. long. The fruit, or nut, hangs in clusters under the crowning plume, and consists of a shell, enveloped in a strong fibrous pericarp, or capsule. In hot climates, every part of the tree is made use of: the natives chew the root as a substitute for the areca; the stem is used as uprights and supports for houses, and for fashioning many domestic implements; the leaves form a thatch, or are made into umbrellas, baskets, buckets, and lanterns; their ashes yield potash in abundance, and their midribs are used as oars and even brushes. The fibre from the nut is woven into cloth, ropes, mats, sacking, and even cloths (see COCOA-NUT FIBRE). By fermentation the juice of the stem is made into a palm-oil, and by distillation into an ardent spirit, and also a coarse sugar, called *jaggery*; while the pith, dried, ground, and washed, forms a farinaceous food similar to sago. The *jaggery*, or coarse sugar, when mixed with lime, forms a durable compost that takes a polish like marble. The fruit itself is a wholesome food, and its milk a cooling beverage, and forms the chief aliment of many of the natives. The fibre of the shell, called *coir*, is used also for brushes; the shell is turned and polished into drinking-cups and measures, while the substance of the nut itself, when pressed, yields a large quantity of oil, which is used largely for lamps and flambeaux; and, lastly, the unexpanded buds, when boiled, form a delicate and much esteemed food.

Cocos, n. [Gr. *kokkos*, a kernel.] (*Bot.*) A genus of trees, order *Palmaceæ*, distinguished by having primate

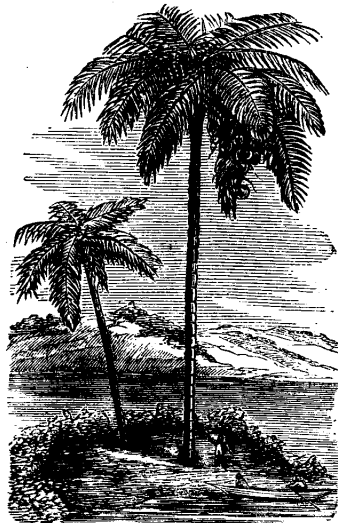


Fig. 639.—COCOA-NUT TREE.
(*Cocos nucifera*.)