

THE SOUTH-EASTERN MOLUCCAS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES.

THIS Report deals with all those islands lying between North-West Australia and South-West New Guinea, and included within 126° and 130° E. longitude, and within 5° and 9° S. latitude, from which there are any collections of plants in the Kew Herbarium. Thus limited, the better known islands of Ceram, Amboina, and Buru are excluded; and Wetter is the most westerly, and the Arrou group the most easterly, of those under consideration. In order to enhance the interest of this Report, some recent collections from the same region at Kew, made by Mr H. O. Forbes and Mr Riedel, have been incorporated with the Challenger collections; yet even with this addition, the whole is a mere fragment of the flora, and almost entirely restricted to the littoral element. Nevertheless, as a contribution to the geographical distribution of plants inhabiting the coasts of tropical seas, this Report possesses, perhaps, as much interest as any one of the botanical series. The Challenger Expedition visited the Arrou and Ki groups, but the botanical collections made by Mr Moseley and other officers reached this country in such a rotten, broken condition that, although the common plants were recognisable, a large proportion of the species are indeterminable, or, if clearly distinguishable from all other known species, the specimens are too imperfect for description. So far as the collections examined are concerned, there is nothing in them indicating an endemic generic element in the flora of the South-eastern Moluccas, for all the apparently undescribed species belong to genera of the Asiatic, Australian, or Polynesian regions; yet from Mr Moseley's description of the vegetation of the Arrou and Ki groups, reproduced below, it must be rich and diversified, and there is little doubt that a thorough exploration of the forests of the interior of the islands would yield a rich harvest. Wallace, too, in his Malay Archipelago, frequently alludes to the variety and luxuriance of the vegetation of the Arrou and Ki groups, and one passage concerning the forests of Arrou is specially interesting. He says (vol. ii. p. 203):—"As I became familiar with the forest scenery of the island, I perceived it to possess some characteristic features that distinguished it from that of Borneo and Malacca, while, what is very singular and interesting, it recalled to my mind half-forgotten impressions of the forests of Equatorial America. For example, the palms were much more abundant than I had generally found them in the East, more generally mingled with the other vegetation, more varied in form and aspect, and presenting some of those lofty and majestic smooth-