

THE PALM-TREE IN CUBA.—The palm-tree is probably the most useful if not the most beautiful tree in the island of Cuba, and is found in every portion of it, giving at once character and beauty to the scenery; and that known as the *palma real* (royal) is only one of the twenty-two varieties which are enumerated in this majestic family of the tropics. Its feathers or branches fall airily and gracefully from the top of a cylindrical trunk of fifteen or twenty yards in height; in the centre of the branches is the heart, (*cogollo*, or bud of the plant,) elevating itself perpendicularly, with its needle-point like a lightning-rod. This heart, enveloped in wrappers of tender white leaves, is called *palmito*, and makes a most nourishing and delicious salad; it is also boiled like cauliflower, and served with a delicate white sauce. In either way it is a very agreeable esculent for the table. The branches, numbering from twenty to twenty-two, are secured to the trunk by a large exfoliated capping called *yagua*, and between each scale there starts out one of the feathers or branches. At the foot of these burst little buds, which open into delicate bunches of small flowers, followed by the fruit or seed, which is used as nourishment for the herds of hogs on the breeding-farms; it is also used as a substitute for coffee among the poor people of some portions of the island.

The trunk of the palm is a cylinder or tube, filled with milky fibres, which, torn off in long strips from top to bottom, are dried, and make a narrow, thin kind of board, with which the peasants form the walls of their rustic habitations, while the branches serve as roofs or covering to their lightly-constructed houses; though for this latter purpose are also used the leaves of the *guano*, the generic name of all the palms, if we except the *palma real*, the *corojo* and the *coco*.

The *yaguas* serve for roofs, and for lining the walls of the huts, and for general purposes of shelter for the country people of Cuba; while they are used also as wrappers for bales of tobacco and other materials. Torn into narrow shreds, they answer for tying packages in lieu of twine.

El yasey is another one of the palms that merits especial mention, for from it they make the excellent palm-leaf hats that are commonly worn on the island among the country people and the villagers, the manufacture of which constitutes one branch of industry among the women, and for which they get from \$1 to \$2 per hat.

Still another palm, known as the *miraguano*, is very useful; as from it is obtained a kind of moss, which, in the country, is used to stuff pillows and mattresses,—where they are used.—*Cuba with Pen and Pencil*, by Samuel Hazard.