

Reprinted from the OTTAWA NATURALIST, Vol. VI., p. 105-113.

MONDAY AFTERNOON POPULAR LECTURES--BOTANY.
THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF BOTANIC GARDENS.

By James Fletcher.

Read January 26th, 1891.

One of the influences which has affected materially the progress of the science of Botany, has been the institution in various parts of the world of Botanic Gardens. The importance of public Botanic Gardens has for centuries been recognized by the governments of civilized states. In an article on this subject in the Encyclopædia Britannica, we find as follows: "The foundation of Botanic Gardens during the XVI and XVII centuries did much in the way of advancing Botany. They were at first appropriated chiefly to the cultivation of medicinal plants. This was especially the case at universities, where medical schools existed. The first Botanic Garden was established at Padua in 1545. The Jardin des Plantes at Paris, was established in 1626. The Botanic Garden at Oxford was founded in 1632. The garden at Edinburgh was founded by Sir Andrew Balfour and Sir Robert Sibbald in 1670, and, under the name of the Physic Garden, was placed under the superintendence of James Sutherland, afterwards professor of Botany in the university. The park and garden at Kew date from about 1730. The garden of the Royal Dublin Society at Glasnevin, was opened about 1796. Ge'ner states that at the end of the 18th century, there were 1600 Botanic Gardens in Europe." (Ency. Brit. IV, 80.)

"The Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew originated in the exotic garden, formed by Lord Capel and greatly extended by the Princess Dowager, widow of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and by George III., aided by the skill of the Aitons, and of Sir Joseph Banks. In 1840 the gardens were adopted as a national establishment, and transferred to the department of woods and forests. The gardens proper, which originally contained only about 11 acres, have been increased to 75 acres and the pleasure grounds and arboretum adjoining extend to 270 acres." (Ency. Brit. XIV, p. 55.)

It may be well now to consider what a Botanic Garden is. In a report of a committee appointed by the British Parliament, in 1838, to enquire into the management, etc of the Royal Gardens at Kew