

out from the centre of the stem, long broad leaves like those of the plantain, only less fragile, and rising, not round the stalk, but in two lines on opposite sides, so that as the leaves increase, and the lower ones droop at the end, or extend horizontally, the tree presents the appearance of a large open fan. When the stem rises ten or twelve feet high, the lower part of the outer covering becomes hard and dry, like the bark [a cocoa-nut tree has no *bark*: the author means the outer layer] of the cocoa-nut tree. Many of the trees in this region were at least thirty feet from the ground to the lowest leaves. I frequently counted from twenty to twenty-four leaves on a single tree, the stalk of each leaf being six or eight feet long, and the broad leaf itself four or six feet more.

“The whole of these twenty-four bright green gigantic leaves, spread out like a fan at the top of a trunk thirty feet high, presented a spectacle as impressive as it was to me rare and beautiful; and in this part of the country they were the most conspicuous objects for miles together, and were it not that these vast bright green shining leaves are slit on each side by the winds, and so flutter in smaller portions with the passing breeze, the prevalence of this tree would impart a degree of almost inconceivable magnificence to the vegetation of the country. In the fan-like head of the traveller’s tree there were generally three or four branches of seed-pods. The parts of fructification seemed to be enclosed in a tough firm spathe, like those of the cocoa-nut, but the subsequent development was more like that of the fruit of the plantain. When the pods, or seed vessels, of which there were forty or fifty on each branch, were ripe, they burst open, and each pod was seen to enclose thirty or more seeds, in shape like a small bean, but enveloped in a fine silky fibre of the most brilliant blue or purple color.

“But this tree has been most celebrated for containing, even during the most arid season, a large quantity of pure fresh water, supplying to the traveller the place of wells in the desert. Whenever I enquired of the natives they always affirmed that such was the fact, and that so abundant and pure was the water, that when the men were at work near the trees, they did not take the trouble to go to the stream for water, but drew off and drank the water from the tree. Having formerly been somewhat sceptical on this point, I determined to examine some of the trees; and during my journey this morning, we stopped near a clump of the trees. One of my bearers