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The form of the OIL PALM (*Elaeis guineensis*, L) is very little known, the tree having never been accurately reproduced in any popular book. It is usually described as growing to a height of 20 to 30 feet, the trunk being thickly covered with the remains of the old leaf-stalks. Two species of *Elaeis* only are described – the one under notice, which is a native of West Tropical Africa, and *Elaeis melanococca*, Gaertn., a South American species; this latter, however, is of no economic or commercial value, while the oil obtained from the former is one of the most valuable products imported into this country from the great African continent.

The trade with the natives is carried on by barter, the oil being paid for mostly in Birmingham and Manchester manufactures, glass and agate beads of various forms, sizes, and finish, being some of the recognised articles of exchange. The fruits from which the oil is obtained are borne in dense heads or spadices, sometimes measuring 2 feet long and 2 or more feet in circumference, the fruits themselves being each about an inch or an inch and a half long, and an inch in diameter. The seeds are enclosed in a very hard bony shell, which is again covered with a softish, pulpy substance,

outwardly, when ripe, of a bright orange or yellow colour. It is from this outer, fleshy portion of the fruit that the best oil is obtained. On the west African coast one of the most important branches of manufacture is that of palm oil. When sufficiently ripe the fruits are gathered chiefly by men. They are boiled by women in large earthenware pots, after which they are crushed in mortars. They are then placed in large clay vats filled with water, and women are employed to tread out the oil, which immediately comes to the surface, when it is collected and again boiled to throw off the water, after which it is placed in barrels or casks for exportation. Good palm oil is of a bright orange or deep yellow colour about the consistence of butter, and when fresh it has an agreeable smell, somewhat resembling Violets. It is now most extensively used in the manufacture of soap and candles, and also for greasing the axles of railway carriage wheels. The first two uses, however, are what the plants are mostly prized for. In Africa the solid oil is used for culinary purposes, often in place of butter, and the hard seeds are made into various ornamental articles.