Some Early Collectors.* For many the Golden Age of Plant Hunters might suggest the era of Wilson, Farrer, Forrest and Kingdon Ward in Western China, but Mr. Lemmon's book deals almost exclusively with those pioneer collectors who explored during the latter half of the 18th and the first 60 years of the 19th centuries and ends with the introduction of the Wardian case and the age of steam, both of which revolutionised the task of the plant hunter. There are splendid chapters on Francis Masson, William Kerr, David Douglas and many others, and a first class account of the ill-starred Bounty voyage told with the emphasis on the fate of Bligh and the Kew botanist David Nelson rather than the future Pitcairn Islanders. The guiding hand behind many of these pioneers was that of Sir Joseph Banks and his personality is shown to have dominated their endeavours until the early 19th century when Kew's sole control over plant hunting was relinquished and, due largely to the rapidly growing Horticultural Society of London, a greater number of well-educated men became available for field work.

Mr. Lemmon tells his stories well, the excitement of new discoveries, the incredible hazards and all too frequent tragedies are, for the most part, vividly related and much information, from sources such as George Don's 'African Journal' and the letters of John Gibson, appears for the first time. Don's expense account makes fascinating reading: in fifteen months he visited six countries at a cost of £415 7s. 5d. and his balance sheet includes a variety of items such as 'From being left behind at Brixton—£5 6s. 3d.', 'For mules—5s.' (Ascension), 'Man for drying papers—10s.' (Sierra Leone), 'Man for loan of spade—1s.' (Jamaica), and, in New York, 'Dinner, supper, bed and board—4s. 6d.'.

The illustrations, particularly those in monochrome, are very well chosen, although more information regarding sources would have been welcome. The colour plates, all from the Botanical Magazine, have suffered from being reproduced half size. Surely in a book of this price they might have been given a page each? It is regrettable that the caption accompanying the plate of *Strelitzia reginae* should incorrectly associate this plant with the Queen of George II (who was in fact Caroline of Ansbach) instead of Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, consort of George III.

This is essentially a book for the reader with more interest in plantsmen than in the plants themselves; the expert, and indeed the well-informed layman, will find much to irritate and exasperate him in the many passages dealing with plants. For instance, on page 29, the palm, *Livistona australis*, is referred to as a tree fern and *Cycas media* as a palm. *Massonia* Thunb. is mentioned several times, on page 57 with the mysterious epithet *hureas*, but we are never even told that it is a member of the Liliaceae. There is a quotation from Masson, page 47, that the Palmiet river takes its name from 'a plant (schoernis serratus) . . . the leaves of which greatly resemble that of the ananas or pineapple but the flowers are like those of a reed'. The genus *Schoernis* will not be found in Index Kewensis but the plant in question must be *Prionium serratum* (*P. palmita*), a member of the rush family with a small trunk and tuft of leaves like a miniature palm. Such quotations are really valueless without the correct identity of the plant. Other inaccuracies and sources of confusion are readily found. The index is by no means comprehensive and indeed some entries are misleading. *Hydnora africana*, the well known parasitic flowering plant appears in the text followed by '(Hydnum?)', in the index we find '*Hydnora africana* (Hydnum, truffle?)'. The danger is that the less well-informed may quote Mr. Lemmon verbatim and thus perpetuate his errors and because of his failure to check on names one wishes that he had confined himself to a selection from the best known introductions of each collector. As a source of biographical material for popular articles and lectures both botanist and horticulturist will find much useful information within this book and Mr. Lemmon has performed a service in compiling material on this remarkable period in such a interesting and, for the most part, highly readable fashion.

R. M. SMITH.

*The Golden Age of Plant Hunters by Kenneth Lemmon. Edited by Peter Hunt. Phoenix House Publications, London 1968, 229 pp, 20 plates (4 col.) 84s.