

The total known number of existing species of Ferns is about 1500. These admit of a threefold geographical distribution :

1. Those of the temperate and frigid zone of the northern hemisphere, containing 144 species.

2. Those of the southern temperate zone, including the Cape of Good Hope, parts of South America, and the extra-tropical part of New Holland, and New Zealand, 140 species.

3. Those which grow within 30 or 35 degrees on each side of the Equator, 1200 species.

If we compare the amount of Ferns with the united numbers of other tribes of plants, we may form some idea of the relative importance of this family in the vegetation of the district, or period to which we apply such comparison. Thus, in the entire number of known species of plants now existing on the globe, we have 1500 Ferns and 45,000 Phanerogamiæ, being in the proportion of 1 to 30. In Europe this proportion varies from 1:35 to 1:80, and may average 1:60. Between the Tropics, Humboldt estimates the number in Equinoxial America at 1:36, and Mr. Brown gives 1:20 as the proportion in those parts of intertropical Continents which are most favourable\* to Ferns.

Mr. Brown (Appendix to Tuckey's Congo Expedition) states that the circumstances most

\* Botany of Congo, p. 42.