

Transcription, January 2015:

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[p. 338c]

‘Reviews of New Books.’

One of the most entertaining books of the season, describing a quarter of the globe very little known, is *The Malay Archipelago, The Land of the Orang-utan and the Bird of Paradise*, by Alfred Russel Wallace, author of “Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro,” “Palm Trees of the Amazon,” etc (Harper and Brothers.) Mr. Wallace is a naturalist who some six years ago visited the localities indicated, and whose contributions to science, as the result, have been most extensive and valuable. Mr. Wallace was eight years absent from England, but as he travelled about fourteen thousand miles within the Archipelago, and made sixty, or seventy, separate journeys, each involving some preparation and loss of time, not more than six years were actually spent in making collections. These collections amount to 310 specimens of mammalia; 100 of reptiles; 8,050 of birds; 7,500 of shells; 13,100 of lepidoptera, 83,200 of colloptera; and 13,400 of other insects—making a total of 125,660 specimens of natural history. These facts speak volumes for Mr. Wallace’s industry and success. His descriptions relate to the Indo-Malay Islands, the Timor Group, the Celebes Group, the Moluccas and the Papuan Group. Concerning these islands, and their inhabitants and productions, much information is given that cannot be found in any other work. Regarding this distant and little-known region, the author says “To the ordinary Englishman this is, perhaps, the least known part of the globe. Our possessions in it are few and scanty; scarcely any of our travellers go to explore it; and in many collections of maps it is almost ignored, being divided between Asia and the Pacific Islands. It thus happens that few persons realize that, as a whole, it is comparable with the primary divisions of the globe, and that some of its separate Islands are larger than France, or the Austrian Empire. The traveller, however, soon acquires different ideas. He sails for days, or even for weeks, along the shores of one of these great islands, often so great that its inhabitants believe it to be a vast continent. He finds that voyages among these Islands are commonly reckoned by weeks and months, and that their several inhabitants are often as little known to each other as are the native races of the northern to those of the southern continent of America. He soon comes to look upon this region as one apart from the rest of the world, with its own races of men and its own aspect of nature; with its own ideas, feelings, customs, and modes of speech, and with a climate, vegetation, and animated life altogether peculiar to itself. . . The Malay Archipelago extends for more than 4,000 miles in length from east to west and is about 1,300 in breadth from north to south. It would stretch over an expanse equal to that of all Europe from the extreme west far into Central Asia, or would cover the widest parts of South America, and extend far beyond the land into the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. It includes three islands larger than Great Britain; and in one of them, Borneo, the whole of the British Isles might be set down, and would be surrounded by a sea of forests. New Guinea, though less compact in shape, is probably larger than Borneo. Sumatra is about equal in extent to Great Britain; Java, Luzon and Celebes are each about the size of Ireland. Eighteen more islands are, on the average, as large as Jamaica; more than a hundred are as large as the Isle of Wight; while the isles and islets of smaller size are innumerable.” It is to this interesting locality that Mr. Wallace introduces the reader and spreads before him a mass of information of all kinds respecting these countries. *The Malay Archipelago* is profusely and handsomely illustrated and furnished with apparently accurate maps of the regions described.

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*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2015.