

*The Malay Archipelago: the Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise. A Narrative of Travel, with Studies of Man and Nature.* By Alfred Russel Wallace. 2 vols. (Macmillan & Co.)

Ethnology, Entomology, and Geography, are illustrated in the voyages recorded in these pages. They extend over a period of about six years, from July, 1854, when the author reached the Straits of Malacca, to November, 1860, when he returned to England. The fruits of these six years of labour were a goodly collection of specimens of birds, insects and shells, and a moral lesson, to which we attach less value than is claimed for it by Mr. Wallace. It is hardly worth while spending six years in the Malay Archipelago in order to discover that we do not sufficiently "train and develop the sympathetic feelings and moral faculties of our nature, nor allow them a sufficient share of influence on our legislation, our commerce and our whole social organization." Our author sometimes met with dealings on the part of the savages with whom he was obliged to fraternize which were remarkable for the sense of honesty, to which they bore evidence. But we can hardly believe that, because a hatchet was returned to him on one or two occasions, when it might easily have been made away with, that the wild people of the Aru Islands have risen to a height of moral elevation to which the majority of Christians have not attained. We shall not, therefore, dilate upon the moral discoveries of our author, but refer rather to his exploits as an explorer in natural history. Altogether, the specimens of natural history brought home by him amounted to 125,680, in which were comprised 3,000 birds' skins of about 1,000 species, and at least 20,000 beetles, and butterflies of 7,000 species. Amongst these were many specimens altogether new and undescribed. Thus, amongst the Longicorn beetles, there were no less than 900 which had never before been seen by European collectors. Amongst Hymenoptera figure 280 different kinds of ants, of which 200 are new. But it is among butterflies and birds of paradise that Mr. Wallace has made the most brilliant and valuable additions to the collections of Europe; and we cannot but sympathize with his delight in securing these novelties, and acknowledge that the terms he uses to express his gratification are admissible from the pen of so true a lover of Nature. The following is an account of his obtaining a specimen of the king bird of paradise:—

"The first two or three days of our stay here were very wet, and I obtained but few insects or birds; but at length, when I was beginning to despair, my boy Baderoon returned one day with a specimen which repaid me for a month of delay and expectation. It was a small bird, a little less than a thrush. The greater part of its plumage was of an intense cinnabar red, with a gloss as of spun glass. On the head the feathers became short and velvety, and shaded into rich orange. Beneath, from the breast downwards, was pure white, with the softness and gloss of silk; and across the breast a band of deep metallic green separated this colour from the red of the throat. Above each eye was a round spot of the same metallic green. The bill was yellow, and the feet and legs were of a fine cobalt blue, strikingly contrasting with all the other parts of the body. Merely in arrangement of colours and texture of plumage, this little bird was a gem of the first water; yet these comprised only half its strange beauty. Springing from each side of the breast, and ordinarily lying concealed under the wings, were little tufts of grayish feathers, about two inches long, and each terminated by a broad band of intense emerald green. These plumes can be raised at the will of the bird, and spread out into a pair of elegant fans when the wings are elevated. But this is not the only ornament. The two middle feathers of the tail are in the form of slender wires, about five inches long, and which diverge in a beautiful double curve. About half-an-inch of the end of this wire is webbed on the outside only, and coloured of a fine metallic green, and, being curved spirally inwards, forms a pair of elegant glittering buttons, hanging five inches below the body, and the same distance apart. These two ornaments, the breast fans and the spirally-tipped tail wires, are altogether unique, not occurring on any other species of the eight thousand different birds that are known to exist upon the earth, and, combined with the most exquisite beauty of plumage, render this one of the most perfectly lovely of the many lovely productions of Nature. My transports of admiration and delight quite amused my Aru hosts, who saw nothing more in the 'Burong raja' than we do in the robin or the goldfinch. Thus one of my objects in coming to the far East was accomplished. I had obtained a specimen of the King Bird of Paradise (*Paradisea regia*), which had been described by Linnæus from skins preserved in a mutilated state by the natives. I knew how few Europeans had ever beheld the perfect little organism I now gazed upon, and how very imperfectly it was still known in Europe. The emotions excited in the mind of a naturalist, who has long desired to see the actual things which he has hitherto known only by description, drawing, or badly-preserved external covering, especially when that thing is of surpassing rarity and beauty, require the poetic faculty fully to express them. The remote island in which I found myself situated, in an almost unvisited sea, far from the tracks of merchant fleets and navies; the wild, luxuriant tropical forest, which stretched far away on every side; the rude uncultured savages who gathered round me,—all had their influence in determining the emotions with which I gazed upon this 'thing of beauty.' I thought of the long ages of the past, during which the successive generations of this little creature had run their course,—year by year being born, and living and dying, amid these dark and gloomy woods, with no intelligent eye to gaze upon their loveliness; to all appearance such a wanton waste of beauty. Such ideas excite a feeling of melancholy. It seems sad that, on the one hand, such exquisite creatures should live out their lives and exhibit their charms only in these wild, inhospitable regions, doomed for ages yet to come to hopeless barbarism; while, on the other hand, should civilized man ever reach these distant lands, and bring moral, intellectual and physical light into the recesses of these virgin forests, we may be sure that he will so disturb the nicely-balanced relations of organic and inorganic nature as to cause the disappearance, and finally the extinction, of these very beings whose wonderful structure and beauty he alone is fitted to appreciate and enjoy. This consideration must surely tell us

that all living things were *not* made for man. Many of them have no relation to him. The cycle of their existence has gone on independently of his, and is disturbed or broken by every advance in man's intellectual development; and their happiness and enjoyments, their loves and hates, their struggles for existence, their vigorous life and early death, would seem to be immediately related to their own well-being and perpetuation alone, limited only by the equal well-being and perpetuation of the numberless other organisms with which each is more or less intimately connected."

In the same way, he tells us that he "trembled with excitement," and was ill for hours after securing some of the most uncommon kinds of butterflies; and we quite understand his feelings. At the same time, we most heartily wish that Mr. Wallace had been a little more descriptive of the curious people with whom he lived, and of the scenery through which he passed. As it is, the impression made by his book is that of a man departing into a far country, and shutting himself out from our observation so completely that all we know is, that he was incessantly pursuing birds and insects with as much activity as the most restless creature in his collection. The plan of his book, too, or rather its want of proper arrangement, adds to the obscurity. His journeys are not described in the order in which they occurred, but according to certain theories he has formed as to the distribution of animal life in the islands he visited. These theories are indicated in a preliminary chapter, which certainly puts before us very vividly the importance of these islands of the Malay Archipelago—an importance which has, perhaps, not hitherto been sufficiently admitted. When we consider that this region of the globe extends more than 4,000 miles in length, from east to west, and is 1,300 in breadth, from north to south, that it includes the three largest islands in the world—three more the size of Ireland, eighteen as large as Jamaica, one hundred as large as the Isle of Wight, and innumerable smaller ones, we are almost inclined to recognize in it a fresh division of the globe. The races that occupy this region are the Malay and the Papuan. Mr. Wallace assigns the palm of superiority to the latter, both physically and intellectually. It is a race which has no place in history like the Malay, and which has not made a single step towards civilization; but, according to our author, there is room to hope that it may yet play a conspicuous part amongst the inhabitants of the Old World.

We have said that Mr. Wallace is too sparing in his descriptions of scenery, and we regret this the more as, when he attempts to draw a picture, he is very felicitous in his touches. Take, for instance, this description of the harbour of Amboyna:—

"Passing up the harbour, in appearance like a fine river, the clearness of the water afforded me one of the most astonishing and beautiful sights I ever beheld. The bottom was absolutely hidden by a continuous series of corals, sponges, actiniae, and other marine productions of magnificent dimensions, varied forms and brilliant colours. The depth varied from about 20 to 50 feet, and the bottom was very uneven; rocks and chasms and little hills and valleys offering a variety of stations for the growth of these animal forests. In and out among them moved numbers of blue and red and yellow fishes, spotted and banded and striped in the most striking manner; while great orange or rosy transparent meduse floated along near the surface. It was a sight to gaze at for hours, and no description can do justice to its surpassing beauty and interest. For once the reality exceeded the most glowing accounts I had ever read of the wonders of a coral sea. There is, perhaps, no spot in the world richer in marine productions, corals, shells and fishes than the harbour of Amboyna. From

the north side of the harbour a good broad path passes through the swamp, clearing and forest, over hill and valley, to the farther side of the island; the coralline rock constantly protruding through the deep red earth which fills all the hollows, and is more or less spread over the plains and hill-sides. The forest vegetation is here of the most luxuriant character: ferns and palms abound, and the climbing rattans were more abundant than I had ever seen them, forming tangled festoons over almost every large forest-tree."

But since it is quite evident that, in our author's journal, there must be an immense mass of information which has not yet been given to the public, we may hope that a second edition will appear, more extended and more carefully arranged; unless, indeed, the pages of his journal have shared the fate of his vocabularies, twenty-five of which were sent to the late Mr. Crawford, and mislaid; "being merely old and much-battered copy-books, they probably found their way to the dust-heap along with other waste-paper." In that case, no enlarged edition of the work can be expected; and nothing remains but to regret the want of care which has occasioned such losses.