

*The Malay Archipelago: the Land of the Orang-utan and the Bird of Paradise.* A Narrative of Travel, &c. By ALFRED RUSSELL WALLACE. London: Macmillan & Co. 1869.

Mr. Wallace has no need to apologise for his six years' delay in publishing this book, since he has been thereby enabled to embody in a permanent form the valuable results of his eight years' energetic and successful travel. As he truly says, 'To the ordinary Englishman the Malay Archipelago 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.' Yet it is a wonderful region, rich with treasures precious to the naturalist of every class. Mr. Wallace has surpassed all his predecessors in accumulating a mass of important scientific information, which he presents so fully and lucidly that his work must henceforth become the standard authority on the zoology of those luxuriant tropical islands. Some slight idea may be formed of the extensive character of his explorations from the fact, that he travelled 14,000 miles within the Archipelago, made sixty or seventy separate journeys, ranging from the more familiar island of Borneo to the obscure islands of Aru. No chronological order has been followed by Mr. Wallace in the arrangement of his information, but the results of several visits are combined in one description of each place. In doing this, he has willingly sacrificed the exciting interest of a continuous narrative to his desire to give the reader the most accurate and complete knowledge.

By careful deductions from the distribution of animal life in the Archipelago, he has gone far towards proving not only that these islands do not form one compact geographical whole, but 'are divisible into two portions nearly equal in extent, which widely differ in their natural products, and really form parts of two of the primary divisions of the earth.' These he terms the Indo-Malayan and the Austro-Malayan divisions of the Archipelago; and he has thus provided data by which the vexed question of the ancient connection of Asia with Australia may be ultimately settled. Some of his speculations are indeed more ingenious than satisfactory, and based on a very narrow foundation of fact. Especially is this noticeable in the chapter on the Natural History of the Timor Group.

As a naturalist, our traveller was eminently industrious and successful, obtaining 125,660 specimens, some new, others very rare and curious.

We are amused at his rapturous enthusiasm on the discovery of a new species of butterfly, as he tells us, 'On taking it out of my net and opening the glorious wings, my heart began to beat violently, the blood rushed to my head, and I felt much more like fainting than I have done when in apprehension of immediate death. I had a headache the rest of the day.' A similar excitement was experienced by our eager traveller when seeking specimens of the gorgeous birds of Paradise. A large portion of Vol. II. is taken up with a narration of these adventures, and descriptions of these magnificent birds; for Mr. Wallace enjoys the enviable fortune of being the only Englishman who has seen and obtained them in their native forests. A whole chapter is given to a full account of their habits and distribution. The incidental descriptions of the people, their customs and government, and his own intercourse with them, add greatly to the charm of the book; but its chief value is as a record and exposition of the natural history of the Archipelago.

There are, however, several points of interest calling for special remark. Mr. Wallace has been long known as one of the most eminent supporters of the Darwinian theories of 'natural selection and variation;' and his evident anxiety to prove these theories awakens our suspicion, and leads him into some very vague speculations. We have no intention of entering into this controversy now. Mr. Darwin has announced his conclusions and promised his facts; when the latter are forthcoming, we shall be prepared to judge of the probability of his theories. We object to hasty generalizations, and venture to suggest that until the investigation is further advanced, and the inferences are more reliable, a tone of modest uncertainty is more becoming from scientific partisans than the rash and assertive dogmatism which has too often characterized their utterances. Mr. Wallace sins in this respect not more grievously than others, but sufficiently so to warrant our warning.

It is somewhat surprising to find him so full of admiration for 'a paternal despotism.' Again and again he defends, with an uncompromising vigour, the Dutch colonial system so daringly attacked in the novel called 'Max Havelaar,' which in political circles created great excitement a short while since. He praises the plan of compelling a debtor to become the slave of his creditor, deploras free trade, and sees immense advantages in a monopoly, even apologising for the wanton destruction of 'the nutmeg and clove trees in many islands, in order to restrict their cultivation to one or two, where the monopoly could be easily guarded.' But the answer to his series of fallacious arguments is given by the action of the Dutch Government itself, which is renouncing the monopoly because it does not pay, a fact that Mr. Wallace entirely ignores. We prefer his natural history to his political economy; especially so when, among his concluding observations, he argues for the superiority of the savage races among whom he has lived over other races, and deploras the moral depravation produced by modern civilization. He declares, 'It is not too much to say that the mass of our population have not *at all* advanced beyond the savage code of morals, and have in many cases sunk below it.' This is exaggeration with a vengeance, but it nullifies itself. We admit and lament the terrible evils inevitably attendant upon the rapid increase of our population and partially distributed wealth. But to affirm that, because paupers are so numerous, we are therefore in a state of 'social barbarism,' is, to put it mildly, simple nonsense. Anyway, the solution of England's social problems is not to be discovered in a return to the condition of the ideal savage, nor in any philosophic system which would 'develope the sym-

'pathetic feelings and moral faculties of our nature,' independently of the Divine regenerative power of the Christian faith, as Mr. Wallace seems to indicate by his studied omission of all reference to the latter. His political theorising we utterly reject, while we gladly acknowledge that he has written the natural history of the Archipelago with an accuracy and precision, a clearness and completeness, such as will leave every student his debtor. The maps and illustrations are fully worthy of this important work.