
It is well known to the scientific world that Mr. Wallace, almost simultaneously with Mr. Darwin, arrived at similar conclusions respecting the origin of species, and that from the distant shores of the Malay Archipelago he communicated these conclusions to Mr. Darwin, at the very time when the latter was about to give to the world what is now known as the Darwinian theory.

Wandering amongst semi-civilised nations, closely noting their types, manners, and languages, making large collections of the hitherto almost unknown birds and insects of these regions, and recording their habits and geographical distribution, he accumulated during the space of eight years a vast number of observations bearing especially on the latter question, and, as such, of enormous value towards the elucidation of the difficult question of the former distribution of land and water over the surface of the globe. To obtain evidence bearing on this point, and on that of the origin of species, was Mr. Wallace's great aim, to which even the collecting of birds and insects was secondary; and while the "125,660 specimens of natural history," recorded in his preface, show his energy and industry in the latter department, the almost as numerous facts and observations gathered by him on physical subjects, and the clearness and accuracy with which he has arranged and utilised them, equally testify to a mind capable not only of seizing and accumulating the various points which bear upon his subject, but of so placing them before his readers as to bring irresistible conviction to their minds.

Knowing Mr. Wallace's high standing as a scientific collector and observer, and occasionally receiving installments of his results in the shape of short papers in various periodicals, naturalists waited impatiently for a fuller account of his expedition; but unlike those travellers who rush into print immediately on their return home, simply publishing their journals as written, and consequently issuing bulky and but partially interesting volumes, Mr. Wallace waited six years before giving us, in two small volumes, the desired book of travels. The consequence is that he has digested and arranged his materials in such a way as to produce, not only a highly interesting, but a most valuable addition to our knowledge of that portion of the world in which he lived and worked so long.

He has followed a somewhat peculiar plan in his book; the best idea of which may perhaps be given by calling it a physico-geographical arrangement. Each group of islands, closely connected by its fauna and human inhabitants, is taken separately; his differen
journeys and collections in each island are first described, and a chapter is devoted to the natural history of each species (8). Mr. Wallace's various expeditions did not correspond with a clear and connected idea of each. The first chapter is devoted to the physical geography of the various islands (though not to the same extent by the plants), and it is clear that the green islands of Java, Sumatra, and Borneo resemble the island continent, while the white islands of the East Indies resemble the white continent, almost as much as each widely separated districts could be expected to resemble each other. As a result, this close resemblance, joined with the fact of the wide extent of the islands, and remarkably shallow, and, lastly, the existence of the extensive range of volcanoes in Sumatra, Java, and Borneo, which have poured out vast quantities of subtropical matter and have built up extensive volcanic masses and lofty mountains, thus forming a vast area for a parallel line of subsidence, all lead irresistibly to the conclusion that the continent of Asia extended far beyond its present limits in a sea-slack, and a similar shallow sea which connects New Guinea and New Zealand, and the continent of Asia, which was quite a part of Asia Below raised above the waters of the ocean; for a great ocean has been formed by the great Ocean of the southern continent, and between the productions of the East and the land of Borneo and Java is known to be a continent, where rare and beautiful creatures might have the use of, if it would be granted to them to live in it. At first I thought of taking out the floor, which would have been enough to walk in and out without stooping; but then there would not be room enough, so I left it just as it was, and have had to let it down. But when the door was fastened, the box was enough to walk in and out without stooping. The upper storey I used for sleeping in and for the collecting of plants, and the lower storey I used to collect my birds, insects, and seeds. (1., 365.)

Moreover, his birds and insects, when once caught, preserved, and added to his collection, still required the utmost watchfulness and care to prevent their being destroyed by ravenous creatures:-

The lean and hungry dogs before mentioned were my greatest enemies, and kept me constantly on the watch. At night I went up to my little loft; they spread their mats on the ground, with my wicker shelves, laid a mat on the ground, with my wicker shelves, the perch for my birds, on which my lads could skin their birds. At one end a large bamboo platform at one side. At one end, with insect and bird labels, all of which were unsolved mysteries. (1., 365.)

It sometimes amuses me to observe how, a few days after I have taken possession of a new house, I am occupied by all the little creatures that have come to me by the medium of booklists and botanical gardens, will naturally be turned into an object of interest by all nature lovers. (1., 365.)

Among the misfortunes incident to collecting in a tropical country, insect plagues must certainly stand foremost. More than once Mr. Wallace was confined to his house by a plague of mosquitoes, sandflies, &c., and he speaks of one of the insect plagues thus: -

The stings and bites and ceaseless irritation caused by these plagues was so great that it would be borne unconsciously; but to be kept prisoner by them in so rich and unexplored a country, where rare and beautiful creatures are to be met with in every forest, seems to me a country reached by such a long and tedious voyage, and which might not exist but for the present century would again visited for the same purpose is a punishment too severe for a naturalist to pass over in silence. " (1., 365.)

Mr. Wallace notices a beautiful flower, which he says " has so carefully studied, and so ably described."

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