

Editor's Book Table.

TRAVELS.

IF the reader will open any common school Atlas and look at the Map of the Eastern Hemisphere, he will observe that between the peninsula of Southern Asia and Australia lie a group of islands—a chain, in truth, which connects Australia with the main land. These islands, the largest and the most luxuriant in the world, constitute the Malay Archipelago. Rich in productions which commerce values, rich also in peculiar life which science investigates with avidity, these islands have, nevertheless, constituted until very recently almost a *terra incognita*.

In 1854 Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace left England to explore this region. Eight years he spent among these islands, observing the manners and customs of their inhabitants, and the physical formation and characteristics of the land, but chiefly in studying their zoology and in collecting specimens. In pursuit of his favorite science he traveled in the Archipelago, in sixty or seventy separate journeys, some 14,000 miles. He returned home with over 125,000 specimens of natural history. He has since spent six years in arranging them and digesting his notes of observation taken at the time. The fruit of this labor is given to the American public through Messrs. Harper and Brothers in a volume* of over six hundred pages, profusely illustrated with more than fifty engravings, including photographic likenesses of some of the most remarkable specimens of birds and insects from his cabinet. Ten maps accompany and enrich the book. It is rarely in these days of professional book-making that a man can be found who has the leisure, the means, and the patience for fourteen years of continuous, persistent, and concentrated study. It is rarely,

therefore, that it is our privilege to welcome a book of such peculiar merit as Mr. Wallace's *Malay Archipelago*.

Mr. Wallace is not an ordinary traveler. He has not gone to catch, in a momentary glance, the salient features of the people and their life, and to describe, with a few brief touches, what any one else might have seen as well in his place; nor yet to paint with gorgeous imaginative coloring the resplendent vegetation and teeming life of these islands of the tropics, whose shores are washed by a tepid sea, and whose hill-sides are bathed with the warmth and radiance of an equatorial sun. He is a scientist. Scientific exploration is with him an enthusiasm. A new zoological specimen is his great delight. He has gone to these islands as a student. Camping among the woods; pushing his canoe through its lazy and overgrown bayous; wading in the water nearly to his arm-pits to get a shot at a monkey; skinning it on the top of a stump because his Malay companions refuse to take it into the boat; accompanied for the most part only by Malay and Papuan guides; a lad sixteen years of age his only English companion at any time; penetrating often into wilds where probably no Anglo-Saxon explorer had been before him—he has achieved his successes only by persistent painstaking and self-denying labors. The number of specimens he has gathered tells at once the story of his research and its results.

In the outset he discloses to us the fact that these seemingly contiguous islands are, if judged by zoological standards, farther apart than Africa and South America. Let the reader draw a line through the Archipelago, leaving Borneo and Java on the west, Celebes and New Guinea on the east. The difference in life between the islands on the easterly and westerly sides of this line are far greater than those between Europe and Asia, or than those between Asia and America. This line passes at one point between isl-

* 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. New York: Harper and Brothers.

ands only fifteen miles asunder. In the channel are intermediate islets; yet zoologically they are in opposite hemispheres. The western or Asiatic group of islands possess the animals which are found upon the main land. The eastern or Australian group possess none of them. In the one "the forests abound in monkeys of many kinds, wild-cats, deer, civets, and otters; and numerous varieties of squirrels are constantly met with. In the latter none of these occur; but the prehensile-tailed cuscus is almost the only terrestrial mammal seen, except wild pigs, which are found in all the islands, and deer. The birds which are most abundant in the western islands are woodpeckers, barbets, trogons, fruit-thrushes, and leaf-thrushes: they are seen daily, and form the great ornithological features of the country. In the eastern islands these are absolutely unknown—honey-suckers and small lorries being the most common birds; so that the naturalist feels himself in a new world, and can hardly realize that he has passed from the one region to the other in a few days without ever being out of sight of land."

On these facts the author propounds the hypothesis which further geological investigation may confirm, modify, or overthrow. This is, that Australia is the remnant of a continent which existed in past ages in the Pacific Ocean; that volcanic action has thrown up islands reaching westward from Australia, and eastward from India, until at last these two lands have met, as it were, in mid-ocean; and that the children of each continent possess still the peculiar life which characterizes the father-land. The division of races certainly lends confirmation to this theory. On the one group are the Papuans—dark-skinned, curly-haired, with the virtues and the vices of a certain rude and untamable energy of character. On the other the Malays—olive-colored, straight-haired, smooth-faced, with the virtues and the vices which belong to indolence and impassiveness.

Mr. Wallace very wisely follows a geographical rather than a chronological order in his book, which is less a volume of travels than a valuable contribution to science. He divides the Archipelago into five distinct groups of islands, and treats of them in five separate sections. In each section he gives first an account of his personal experiences, adventures, and observations in the group of which he is treating, and closes with a chapter devoted to a discussion of its natural history. His book is thus not wanting in that interest which belongs to romantic adventure in a comparatively unknown country. At the same time it possesses in addition peculiar interest to those who have felt the fascination which belongs to zoological investigations, since it treats of a land many of whose animals are to be found nowhere else. The Orang-Utan is never seen, as a native, off the islands of Sumatra and Borneo; nor the Bird of Paradise except in New Guinea and its contiguous isles; while of birds, butterflies, moths, and beetles, the pictures in this volume give us a tantalizing hint, which makes us anxious to see for ourselves the collection made at such pains and expense from which they are taken. We almost envy Mr. Wallace his eight years' wandering. We thank him cordially for his endeavor to enable others to enjoy his advantages without practicing his self-denial.

And we congratulate him heartily on his success.