

"Notes of a Botanist on the Amazon and Andes." By Richard Spruce. Edited by Alfred Russel Wallace. 2 vols. London: Macmillan. 1908. 21s. net.

Various as are the men of science described in Sir William Ramsay's volume, Dr. Russel Wallace's memorials of Richard Spruce introduce us to an entirely different type—the collecting naturalist, who might without any vanity appropriate to himself S. Paul's words "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by the heathen, in perils of the wilderness". Richard Spruce was the son of a Yorkshire schoolmaster, born in 1817, who early developed not only a passion for collecting plants but a power of discrimination and classification which led to his discovering new British species of mosses and liverworts in his own locality, and made him an accomplished systematist. Ill-health turned him from school-mastering, and having proved his capacity as a collector by an expedition to the Pyrenees, in 1849 he embarked for the Amazons as a collector of plants, his expenses being met by a few subscribers for the sets of specimens he sent home. From then until 1864 Spruce was in the wilderness, making his way eventually right across the continent, and doing a good deal of exploration among the Andean valleys. By 1864 his health had broken down completely, and he returned to England, where for the last thirty years of his life he was never able to walk more than half a mile from his cottage, or even for months together to sit up to a table to write or to use a microscope. He had lost his savings by the failure of a Guayaquil house, but thanks to the efforts of Sir Clements Markham a Civil List pension of £50 a year, to which the Indian Government afterwards added another £50, enabled him to live. Despite these conditions it was after his return that he completed his classical paper on the "Palms of the Amazon Valley", and a monumental volume on the liverworts of the same region. Spruce was a botanist *pur sang*, a discoverer of new species and maker of herbaria, not a collector of orchids or plants of horticultural value, though he did one piece of economic work of great and enduring importance, the collection of living Chinchona plants and seeds,

by means of which the Indian plantations were established. Spruce's accounts of his travels, partly taken from his journals and partly from letters to his botanical correspondents, are perhaps too technical to be always interesting to the general reader, but they are clearly and at times vividly written, with many valuable discussions on native life in the hitherto unexplored regions to which he reached. To the outside view there are few careers more romantic than that of the collector, be it of plants or animals; but in Spruce's journals, as in many other famous records of the same kind, one may read what an endless and heartbreaking struggle it is against fatigue and disease, the insolence of the official and the stupidity of the native, and most of all against that awful inertia which pursues the European working alone in the steaming tropical forest. It was in the Amazons that Dr. Russel Wallace won his spurs as a naturalist, it is an act of no small devotion that at his great age he should thus have given up his time to putting up this memorial to a fellow-worker in the same region.

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