

121. *Wallace on Darwinism.*

[Darwinism: an Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection, with some of its Applications. By Alfred Russel Wallace. London: 1889. 1 vol. 8vo. 494 pp.]

It is quite time that a new and popular exposition of the theory of Natural Selection, "from the standpoint reached after thirty years of discussion," should be drawn up, and no one could have been suggested to perform this task so well as our excellent fellow-worker Mr. Wallace, himself the co-discoverer with Darwin of that immortal theory. We have read through this well-arranged and well-written treatise with great pleasure, and are sure that, although it is not specially connected with ornithology, most other members of the B. O. U. have done, or will do, the same. In our opinion the author has well succeeded in his endeavour "to enable any intelligent reader to obtain a clear conception of Darwin's work, and to understand something of the power and range of his great principle."

We may venture, however, to call Mr. Wallace's attention to two small (ornithological) points, which require a few words of correction in the next edition. The species of the genus *Cinclus* (see p. 116) should not be said to frequent "*exclusively*" the mountain-streams of the northern hemisphere. Three well-marked members of this group are found only in the highlands of South America, namely, *C. leuconotus* in Colombia, *C. leucocephalus* in Peru, and *C. schulzi* in the Argentine Republic.

It is also quite true that (as stated, p. 154) the great mass of Parrots never breed in captivity. But it is very singular and worthy of notice that some of the small Australian species (*Melopsittacus undulatus*, *Euphema pulchella*) are, on the other hand, ready and constant breeders in our aviaries—"Natura non habet regulam."

Mr. Wallace has devoted some space to the criticism of

Darwin's theory of sexual selection, so far as it includes the action of female choice or preference on the development of decorations in the male. We fully acknowledge the force of his arguments, but are hardly disposed to coincide with the alternative explanation of "greater vigour and excitability" as sufficient to account for the many extraordinary developments of the male plumage in birds and other animals. We also rather take exception to the expression "accessory plumes," often used in this connection. These so-called "accessory plumes" will always be found on close examination to be nothing more than *ordinary* plumes *extraordinarily* developed, not new creations, as one would be led to suppose by that ill-chosen expression.