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[p. 1h]

‘Literary Notices.’

*The Geographical Distribution of Animals.*

By Alfred Russel Wallace. New York: Harper & Brothers. Mr. Wallace has double claims on attention. He was a co-laborer with Mr. Darwin in broaching the doctrine of natural selection and survival of the fittest, and he is the author of a work on the Malay Archipelago, which did more to show what it is and how populated than all preceding works have done. His specialty is natural history, and of this he is a recognized master. He brings to it great geological, historical and philosophical learning, and a calm, though positive spirit, which places great inferences upon actual knowledge, and is perhaps a little more ready to seek facts for proof than simply to deduce a necessary conclusion from facts legitimately learned. But he collects his facts with singular patience and care, arranges them lucidly, and explains them in a manner as satisfactory to the unlearned as to specialists.

The summary of the present work is, that all of the higher forms of life originally appeared in the northern hemisphere, and were distributed by successive colonization through other portions of the globe. These migrations are placed in a very remote past, and it is argued that each was and most have remained so separate, that a zoological geography may be prepared with as much accuracy as a physical. And this fact is considered as applicable to extinct as to living faunas, and it is by comparison with the latter that the former are judged. The idea is an elaboration and extension of the germ that was contained in the study of the Malayan Archipelago; but what was barely suggested there as a probability and considered briefly, is here extended through two large volumes, and insisted upon with evidences that are very strong, if not conclusive. Commencing with an elaborate study of the phenomena of animal distribution and the bearing of vegetation and climate upon such distribution, with what can be learned of the distribution of extinct mammalia on both continents, and of insects, critical attention is given to the characteristics of the six zoological regions into which the world is divided—the Palæarctic, Ethiopian, Oriental, Australian, Neotropical and Nearctic. This, the bulk of the treatise, is an encyclopedia of the knowledge to which it is devoted; somewhat dry, but far from being unintelligible to non-scientific readers who possess that familiarity with ordinary terminologies school children are at least supposed to have. Having considered the subject geographically, it is passed in review under the laws of systematic zoology, under the several heads of mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects and mollusca. Considerable attention is paid to the extinct mammalia of this country, based chiefly, if not altogether, upon Professor Cope’s discoveries; and the extinction of the great mastadons, elephants, horses and felines, whose remains have been unearthed at many points, is ascribed to the glacial epoch described by Agassiz. The horse and peccary are the only mammalia allowed to have originated on this continent. We have stated the conclusions—that all the higher forms of life originated in the northern hemisphere. The statements of fact are unquestionably all that they are represented to be, and represent the best existing knowledge. The conclusions agree with Darwin and Lyell closely if not completely; though reserve is made for other discoveries which are expected. Valuable to the naturalist and geologist, and interesting to all readers, the

treatise is invaluable to students of evolution and to all who would be armed on either side of that. The maps and illustrations are numerous and important.

[\[Return\]](#)

*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2015.