

THE MALAYAN ARCHIPELAGO.*

WE never remember to have taken up a book which gave us more pleasure, nor to have finished reading one with more regret than this of Mr. Wallace's. Books of travel are generally wearily prolonged land-logs, with details of unimportant incidents and tedious dialogues. Of quite another stamp is this one. Mr. Wallace has been for eight years minutely exploring one of the most unknown, most distant, and yet most interesting portions of the world, and he has written us a romance, which is, nevertheless, plain matter of fact, of its natural history. If we had only space to give a number of extracts from the work, we should be able to do the author some little justice; as it is, we can barely give the rudest outline of one of the most fascinating, and withal important, contributions to physical and biological knowledge which has for some years, at least, been published. The author—who we may mention brought home from the Malayan Archipelago nearly 126,000 specimens—has of course given very graphic accounts of the general features of the myriad of islands through which he travelled, of the natives and their habits, of the colonists and their labours, and so forth. These descriptions make up the great bulk of two handsomely illustrated volumes. But it is not to them we would refer especially, but to the very admirable manner in which Mr. Wallace, uniting the philosopher to the observer, has generalised on the facts presented to him during his researches. It is unhappily too much the case that travellers think they have nothing more to do than shoot a multitude of birds, and collect a quantity of insects, and then send them home and describe them. It is from this impression that writers of books of travel produce such dry and useless volumes. What Mr. Wallace has done, however, will render his work not less significant as a contribution to physical geography than it is attractive as a well written record of a remarkable exploration. The joint originator of the Darwinian theory, has examined both the human and the animal productions of the wonderful group of islands he visited, and his study of them has led him to a conclusion of the highest interest to naturalists and geologists. He has established a distinction of origin and association between the component parts of the Archipelago. Without the good map which accompanies the volumes, we could not explain the direction of the line of division which Mr. Wallace lays down, but we may state it generally.

From a series of carefully taken soundings, Mr. Wallace, following up Mr. Earl's enquiries, has shown that the large islands on the Asiatic side are separated from Asia by a very shallow ocean; he has found that, similarly, New Guinea and its group are separated from Australia by a corresponding shallow sea; but he has seen also that these two halves as it were of the Archipelago are separated from each other by comparatively deep water. From this circumstance, and from a comparison of the natural products, and from a study of the resemblances between the fauna of Asia and the north-western Malayan Islands, and of the Australian fauna and

* "The Malayan Archipelago, the land of the Orang-utan and the Bird of Paradise: a Narrative of Travel; with Studies of Man and Nature." By A. R. Wallace. 2 vols. Macmillan, 1869.

that of the south-eastern islands, he, we think, satisfactorily establishes the proposition that the Austro-Malayan division belongs to the now diminished but originally vast continent of Polynesia, while the Indo-Malayan section is a detached portion of the continent of Asia. The same line of demarcation does not, Mr. Wallace admits, apply to the lower animals and man, but the human line, so to speak, so closely corresponds to that for the animals, that the division, says the author, "is on the whole almost as well-defined and strongly contrasted as in the corresponding Zoological division of the Archipelago into the Indo-Malayan and Austro-Malayan region."

The appendix to Mr. Wallace's work contains a short but useful account of the measurements of the Malayan cranium, and a still more useful list of a hundred and seventeen words as they are found in thirty-three different languages of the Malay Archipelago. In conclusion, we would say of this work, that it is a book worthy to be placed between Lyell's *Principles* and Darwin's *Origin of Species*, for it is an application of the principles laid down in these two standards of English biological philosophy.
