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[p. 18c]

“‘Compendium of Geography and Travel: Australasia” (Edward Stanford).’

This is the new volume of that capital series of geographical hand-books, published by Mr. Stanford—the most complete works of the kind, perhaps, regarding their size and cost, which have ever been brought out in this country. And, considering the foremost position which for centuries past Englishmen have taken as geographical discoverers, we are glad to see that Mr. Alfred R. Wallace, the editor, has not been so dependent as his predecessors in former volumes of the series on Hellwald’s “*Die Erde und Ihre Völker*,” but has compiled his book from independent sources. The first third of the volume is devoted to the island-continent of Australia. Although this portion of the work is fairly well done, there is little in it which may not be found in the various descriptive hand-books put forth in the interest of the various colonies, or in that most useful and excellent guide to the antipodal world, Messrs. Gordon and Gotch’s “*Australian Hand-book*.” But when we leave Australia, we find Mr. Wallace’s book very valuable, inasmuch as it gathers together, briefly and compactly, a mass of information about a number of interesting countries concerning which “the general reader” is not too well informed. Moreover, Mr. Wallace once wrote a very fascinating book on “*The Malay Archipelago*,” and he is seen at his very best when describing the gorgeous *flora* and the remarkable *fauna* of the tropical islands with which the seas between Asia and Australia are so plentifully studded. Reading successively the account of the Philippine Islands—Spain’s chief Asiatic possession—of the Dutch East Indies, where a territory thrice as large as the German Empire is ruled by the citizens of a diminutive State lying thousands of miles away in the foggy north—and of the various Polynesian groups where French, British, and American influence—if not absolute sovereignty—is exercised over the native races, one is led to contemplate the problem of European intercourse with savage, or semi-savage, races. It would seem that in small islands, such as the Melanesian group, or in temperate climates where the white man can work and breed, as in Southern Australia or New Zealand, the dark race fades away before the pale-faces, just as the English grasses kill those of aboriginal growth. In extensive tropical regions, on the other hand, where the white man is an exotic, the native is well able to hold his own. And we may also learn from this volume that, although our conquests of regions inhabited by dark-skinned men have been greater than those of other nations, it is very questionable whether we have managed the natives so well. The Javanese, under the commercial depotism of the Dutch, and the Philippines, under the ecclesiastical sway of the Spaniards, are apparently a happier and more prosperous people than the inhabitants of British India. Perhaps, however, the Sarawak experiment, which combines a despotic headship with considerable local independence, affords the most hopeful prospect in this direction. Altogether this is a delightful book; it is fully furnished with maps and woodcuts, and Mr. A. H. Keane’s learned appendix on the various native races and language is well deserving of study.

*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2017.