

ANALYSES OF BOOKS.

Stanford's Compendium of Geography and Travel. Based on Hellwald's "Die Erde und Ihre Völker." "Australasia." Edited and extended by ALFRED R. WALLACE, F.R.G.S. With Ethnological Appendix by A. H. KEANE, M.A.I. London : E. Stanford.

THIS volume, unlike the rest of the series to which it belongs, consists almost entirely of new matter, the account of Malaysia, Australia, and the Pacific Islands, as found in Hellwald's original work, being far too meagre. It can scarcely be necessary to say that to bring up the treatise to a level with the expectations and the wants of the British public no more competent editor than Mr. A. R. Wallace could have been found, specially qualified as he is by prolonged travels in a large portion of the islands described.

The work embraces an account of the Malay Archipelago,—taking the term in its widest sense,—of Australia proper, of New Zealand, and of the island-groups extending to the eastward more than half-way across the Pacific. These regions, though in actual land-area little exceeding Europe, extend in longitude over more than one-third the circumference of the globe, and present diversities both of physical features and of organic life hardly to be found elsewhere.

After a general survey of the peculiarities—geographical, geological, botanical, and ethnological—of this extensive region, the author proceeds to a systematic account of the several islands, beginning with Australia proper as the largest and most important. As may be expected, the natural history of the country is described briefly, yet with great care and evident accuracy. It may interest the reader to know that one species of *Eucalyptus*, growing about 40 miles to the east of Melbourne, is the largest tree in the world, surpassing even the far-famed *Wellingtonias* (*Sequoias*) of California. A fallen specimen of the length of 480 feet has been actually measured. Such a tree, if it could grow in St. Paul's Churchyard, would wave its crest high over the cross at the summit of the cathedral. It is remarkable that the alpine flora of Australia contains thirty-eight species not merely representative of, but actually identical with, forms now occurring in Europe. The plants of Australia are by no means so exceptional as its animals. No widely distributed order is absent from Australia, and, on the other hand, no leading Australian order is wanting in the rest of the world. Sir Joseph D. Hooker, in his interesting treatise on the Flora of Australia, suggests that its antecedents may have inhabited an area to the

westward of the present Australian continent, and that the three southern floras—the Antarctic, Australian, and South African—may all have been members of one great vegetation which may once have covered an area as large as that of Europe.

It is interesting to notice that, as far as Australia is concerned, the epoch of subsidence in the southern hemisphere has passed its maximum, and that elevation has been traced at various places along the coast.

It must not, however, be supposed that the entire work is devoted to strictly scientific considerations. Both as regards Australia and the smaller islands we have full accounts of the progress of discovery and colonisation, of commerce, agriculture, and mining.

In the account of Borneo Mr. Wallace once more pays a well-merited tribute to the memory of the late Sir James Brooke, and triumphantly refutes the vile calumnies that have been again vented against him, both in and out of Parliament. Never before was a ruler, alien in race, language, and religion, so beloved by his subjects. He has left behind him, as Mr. Wallace truthfully observes, "over the whole of northern Borneo, a reputation for wisdom, for goodness, and for honour, which will dignify the name of Englishman for generations to come."

Our author, it must be noted, is—not without reason—somewhat sceptical as to the propriety and prudence of suddenly forcing our civilisation upon simple and ignorant populations. The general results of such attempts is that a few merchants and planters accumulate large fortunes, whilst harmless races are "improved off the face of the earth."

Perhaps the only point upon which we must differ from Mr. Wallace is where he, arguing from Java to England, recommends irrigation. He forgets, we fear, that in our climate—where evaporation as compared with rainfall is at a minimum—water, instead of being, as under the brilliant suns of tropical or semi-tropical regions, the one thing needful to ensure fertility, is with us, in average seasons and for our most important crops, the great cause of the farmer's troubles.

We need proceed no further with our survey of this most valuable book. Were we to notice even a tithe of the important facts which it contains we should fill up an entire issue of the "Journal of Science." It may truly be said of Mr. Wallace that "*Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.*" The present work will only extend and enhance the reputation he has already won.
