

*History, Biography, and Topography.*

*The Malay Archipelago: The Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise. A Narrative of Travel, with Studies of Man and Nature.* By ALFRED RUSSELL WALLACE, Author of "Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro," "Palm-Trees of the Amazon," etc. 12mo., pp. 638. New York; Harper & Bros. 1869.

Mr. Wallace is specially distinguished among scientists for having arrived independently at the central idea which Mr. Darwin has elaborated with such brilliant results in his *Origin of Species*—that animal forms are limitlessly variable in their development, and species is but the present form preserved by favorable conditions. The present work is the record of eight years' scientific life and vigilant observation in the isles of the Indian Ocean. It is the pioneer of a completer knowledge of a region but dimly known in English literature; in fact, one of the opening announcements that the great and wonderful Pacific, rich with incalculable future possibilities, *is coming into history.*

Mr. Wallace, however, has no dashing enthusiasm, no rhetoric, or pictorial fancy. His is the quiet, prosaic enthusiasm of the man of science, who rejoices in catching flying frogs, unique butterflies, fresh species of beetles, and rare birds for stuffing and housing for the museums of the savans. He spends days in hunting the orang, that mockery of the human shape, leaping from tree-top to tree-top, skillfully evading the rifle amid the densest foliage. It is a perfect paradise to him to obtain eighteen species of that unrivaled glory of the winged realm, the Bird of Paradise; and his pages are pictorially glorified with their beautiful figures, adorned by nature with a quaint series of contrivances too clearly *intentional* in their aspects and character to be explicable on the theory of blind development. Most minds are apt to imagine that in this region of romance, where the sunbeam and the moisture blend their powers to paint all nature in the most dazzling hues, and to wreath all being into the most luxuriant forms of beauty, the fancy of the poet would spring into life in the most prosaic brain. Mr. Wallace not only exhibits no such inspiration, but he flings a terrible wet blanket over the enthusiasm of his readers by firmly telling them that these fancy pictures of luxuriant tropical splendors have no real counterpart in nature. Single products there are in the tropics, unsurpassed in brilliancy by the other zones; but the belief that the tropical landscapes and thickets are festooned with an overwhelming overgrowth of ever-blooming vernal glories is an illusion produced by the *collection* of the richest specimens in the

hot-houses of our naturalists. "The fine tropical flowering-plants cultivated in our hot-houses have been culled from the most varied regions, and therefore give a most erroneous idea of their abundance in any one region. Many of them are very rare, others extremely local, while a considerable number inhabit the more arid regions of Africa and India, in which tropical vegetation does not exhibit itself in its usual luxuriance. Fine and varied foliage, rather than gay flowers, is more characteristic of those parts where tropical vegetation attains its highest development, and in such districts each kind of flower seldom lasts in perfection more than a few weeks, or sometimes a few days. In every locality a lengthened residence will show an abundance of magnificent and gayly-blossomed plants, but they have to be sought for, and are rarely at any one time or place so abundant as to form a perceptible feature in the landscape. But it has been the custom of travelers to describe and group together all the fine plants they have met with during a long journey, and thus produce the effect of a gay and flower-painted landscape. They have rarely studied and described individual scenes where vegetation was most luxuriant and beautiful, and fairly stated what effect was produced in them by flowers. I have done so frequently, and the result of these examinations has convinced me that the bright colors of flowers have a much greater influence on the general aspect of nature in temperate than in tropical climates. During twelve years spent amid the grandest tropical vegetation, I have seen nothing comparable to the effect produced on our landscapes by gorse, broom, heather, wild hyacinths, hawthorn, purple orchises, and buttercups."—P. 245.

Mr. Wallace is, of course, observant of the nature of *man*, as presented in these Pacific regions. The two great races are the Papuan, whose center appears to be Australia; and the Malay, who hails from the Asiatic continent. These are two very strikingly contrasted races. The former are an irrepressible, lively, rollicking, ingenious, and inquisitive folk; the latter, with their mild round features are the very embodiment of the phlegmatic, the soft, and the impassive. The Papuan race covers the immense range of the Southern Pacific isles, including the Sandwich. If Caucasian "civilization" overspreads these regions, Mr. Wallace predicts that the Malays will survive as a convenient subservient race, while "extinction" is clearly the "destiny" of the irrepressible Papuan. "A warlike and energetic people, who will not submit to national slavery or to

domestic servitude, must disappear before the white man as surely as do the wolf and the tiger." So that Mr. Wallace applies inflexibly, even to the human race, the great law of the "survival of the fittest."

But in comparison with the primitive life of the isles, Mr. Wallace is no admirer of our present complex civilization. The idea of our philanthropy is a future mundane state, in which right and justice shall so rule that the peace and happiness of all shall be secured. "Now it is very remarkable, that among people in a very low stage of civilization we find some approach to such a perfect social state. I have lived with communities of savages in South America and in the East, who have no laws or law courts but the public opinion of the village freely expressed. Each man scrupulously respects the rights of his fellow, and any infraction of those rights rarely or never takes place. In such a community all are nearly equal. There are none of those wide distinctions of education and ignorance, wealth and poverty, master and servant, which are the product of our civilization; there is none of that wide spread division of labor which, while it increases wealth, produces also conflicting interests; there is not that severe competition and struggle for existence, or for wealth, which the dense population of civilized countries inevitably creates. All incitements to great crimes are thus wanting, and petty ones are repressed, partly by the influence of public opinion, but chiefly by that natural sense of justice and of his neighbor's right, which seems to be, in some degree, inherent in every race of man.

"Now, although we have progressed vastly beyond the savage state in intellectual achievements, we have not advanced equally in morals. It is true that among those classes who have no wants that cannot be easily supplied, and among whom public opinion has great influence, the rights of others are fully respected. It is true, also, that we have vastly extended the sphere of those rights, and include within them all the brotherhood of man. But it is not too much to say, that the mass of our populations have not at all advanced beyond the savage code of morals, and have in many cases sunk below it. A deficient morality is the great blot of modern civilization, and the greatest hinderance to true progress."—P. 597.

If, therefore, this "perfect state" is ever to be attained, we are now only in a condition of very crude transition. That state will only be realized as the result of a high moral effort. It will

be the artistic consummation of which the natural state was but the shadow. Is there any just hope of this high attainment? If through *nature*, it can only be by countless ages of *development*. If through revelation and grace, there may be now the faint dawning morning-ray.

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