

WALLACE'S MALAY ARCHIPELAGO.*

THOUGH nominally a book of travel, Mr. Wallace's crowded chapters are arranged with reference to a scientific thesis, viz., that in the East Indian Archipelago there meet, and have only recently begun to mingle, two quite distinct races of men—the Malays and the Papuans—and that these islands are really the fragments of two continental systems, between which it is possible to draw accurately the dividing line. The author's observations, therefore, on the fauna and inhabitants of each island which he visited are directly used as an argument in establishing first its relation to the mainland, and then to its sister islands; the probable order of its dismemberment, through volcanic activity producing subsidence of the adjoining parts; and some of the vicissitudes of elevation it may have undergone in reaching its present state. He attempts, as he says, to bring zoölogy to the rescue of the geologists, who are thrown off the scent when they come to water; and, by means of "an accurate knowledge of the distribution of birds and insects, to map out lands and continents which disappeared beneath the ocean long before the earliest traditions of the human race." For this purpose, his plan is probably the best that could have been adopted. He disregards chronological sequence, and skips now backwards now forwards in the eight years of his tropical wanderings, but observes a geographical succession, and finishes as he goes along, although he may have visited a given island a number of times. Each of the five groups which he distinguishes has a separate chapter discussing its natural history, and the support it lends to the thesis first-mentioned. The reader, thus escaping the fatigue of unbroken narration, readily consents to do at intervals a little necessary thinking, and is more easily persuaded by the argument taken in detail.

This method is different from Prof. Bickmore's, who has chosen the commoner form of the diary, and who had no theory to maintain. We have re-read his work in comparison with Mr. Wallace's, and have been gratified to find them complementary of each other in an eminent degree. For instance, the latter is chiefly a zoölogist, the former a geologist and conchologist. Hence the general outline and prominent physical characteristics of each island, as seen on approach to it, are carefully noted by Bickmore; while, with one or two exceptions, Wallace makes no account of his voyages, but begins his descriptions on *terra-firma*. Then, their explorations were not coextensive, and when they coincided the one has much to tell which the other overlooks, and generally they do not seem to have been entertained by the same persons. Thus they often saw nature and society very differently, as was remarkably the case with the island of Bouru, which formed the subject of one of Bickmore's pleasantest chapters—he visiting it in the dry season—and one of Wallace's least agreeable, since he found everything wet and miserable. There is, however, too much of the guide-book in Bickmore, and he may without shame yield in attractiveness of style and in extent of knowledge to his senior. The search after shells, too, competes at a disadvantage with the hunting and taming of orang-utans and the discovery of birds of paradise—two specialties which alone would render the English naturalist's work more interesting; and that Mr. Wallace can tell a story very well merely for the sake of telling it is evident from Chapter XII.—a delightful episode, in which the Rajah of Lombock figures as a census-taker.

It is difficult to choose from the wealth of observations collected by Mr. Wallace such as shall best represent him. As a disciple of Darwin, to whom he dedicates his book, he offers fresh evidence to confirm his views of the origin of species. Sharing the scepticism as to final causes which distinguishes modern science, he writes thus of the durion, which he calls the king of fruit, and which is "about the size of a large cocconut, and covered all over with short, stout spines:"

"Poets and moralists, judging from our English trees and fruits, have thought that small fruits always grew on lofty trees, so that their fall should be harmless to man, while the large ones trailed on the ground. Two of the largest and heaviest fruits known, however, the Brazil-nut fruit and durion, grow on lofty forest trees, from which they fall as soon as they are ripe, and often wound or kill the native inhabitants. From this we may learn two things: first, not to draw general conclusions from a very partial view of nature; and secondly, that trees and fruits, no less than the varied productions of the animal kingdom, do not appear to be organized with exclusive reference to the use and convenience of man."

In the same spirit, he remarks of the birds of paradise:

"It seems sad that on the one hand such exquisite creatures should live out their lives and exhibit their charms only in these wild inhospitable regions, doomed for ages yet to come to hopeless barbarism; while, on the

* "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 Russel Wallace. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1869.

other hand, should civilized man ever reach these distant lands, and bring moral, intellectual, and physical light into the recesses of these virgin forests, we may be sure that he will so disturb the nicely balanced relations of organic and inorganic nature as to cause the disappearance, and finally the extinction, of these very beings whose wonderful structure and beauty he alone is fitted to appreciate and enjoy. This consideration must surely tell us that all living things were *not* made for man. Many of them have no relation to him. The cycle of their existence has gone on independently of his, and is disturbed or broken by every advance in man's intellectual development; and their happiness and enjoyments, their loves and hates, their struggles for existence, their vigorous life and early death, would seem to be immediately related to their own well-being and perpetuation alone, limited only by the equal well-being and perpetuation of the numberless other organisms with which each is more or less intimately connected."

There is still, of course, a sense in which every created thing visible to man, and capable of stimulating his curiosity or satisfying his intelligence, may be said to have been made for him; and this has been abused by the theologians to exaggerate man's importance in the universe, whereas it is not his order or end in creation, but his perfectibility, that is in question, and which might subordinate to itself even higher organizations than man's own. In this sense, races and generations of men exist and have existed for the benefit of mankind—the inhabitant of the "lake-dwellings" lately revealed in Switzerland not more than the Papuan pile-dweller whom Mr. Wallace encountered in New Guinea, alive and actually accumulating his "kitchen-midden." The study, indeed, of savage and barbarous tribes in the Archipelago lends half its worth to Mr. Wallace's narrative, and he derives from the native society of the islands valuable lessons for all civilized communities.

His narrative closes with a contrast, by no means favorable to his country, between English civilization and the natural state of the savage peoples whom he had visited in the East and previously in South America, and among whom, though without laws or courts, individual rights were scrupulously regarded and seldom infringed, a nearly perfect equality prevailed, and, the incitement to great crimes being wanting, petty crimes were "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." We get the other side of this picture when we examine, not the harmony of any given tribe or population within itself, but inter-tribal relations, and find in the "head-hunters" and pirates of the Archipelago the analogue of our Indian scalpers and something worse; and when we learn of the abrogation of many of these savage practices since the advent of Europeans. We are still further enlightened when pointed to the increase of the native population in Java as the best evidence of good government—at least, of a much better government than the Dutch supplanted: the grinding tyranny of the native princes. Java Mr. Wallace calls the best-governed tropical island in the world, and it doubles its population in about twenty-six years. In Celebes, however, or at least in the region called Minahasa, where the Dutch system has produced even more striking results in the manners, peaceableness, and industry of the natives, the increased population is not, according to our author, what it should be, and he adds: "I can only impute this to one cause—infant mortality, produced by neglect while the mothers are working in the plantations, and by general ignorance of the conditions of health in infants." On the other hand, in accounting for the stationary population of the Hill Dyaks of Borneo under Sir James Brooke's régime, he attributes it to the infertility of the women, and this in turn to their "hard labor and the heavy weights they constantly carry." Mr. Wallace's remedy in both instances is to withdraw the women from the field to the house, and to confine them to domestic occupations—"a change which has already to a great extent taken place in the allied Malay, Javanese, and Bugis tribes." This appears to be sound advice in a tropical country, but in our sub-tropical South we are witnessing such a withdrawal of female laborers from agriculture without notable increase in the population, owing, it is said, to the nefarious practice of feticide.

Scattered through many pages of Mr. Wallace's work, we find rather an elaborate defence of the Dutch colonial system in the Archipelago, partly as an offset to the representations contained in the story of "Max Havelaar." So far as the actual rule is concerned, and the general welfare of the governed populations, we allow great weight to Mr. Wallace's testimony. Had he stopped there, it seems to us, he would have furnished the best of arguments—"by their fruits." But he must go on and maintain not only that the Dutch policy has been a prudent one in all respects—elevating the natives while strengthening the European dominion, and earning vast revenues for the mother country—but also peculiarly a moral one. In taking this extreme and uncalled-for position, he has neglected

to set clearly before his readers the historical progress of the Dutch rule in Malaysia, without a knowledge of which the discussion is calculated rather to deceive than to enlighten. For instance, because the Dutch East India Company supplanted with a milder sway the Portuguese, while still intent on exploiting the natives for its own benefit, Mr. Wallace allows himself to speak of these traders as "repaying themselves" by getting a monopoly of the spice traffic, as if what they had done were a laborious act of Christian charity and not the product of the purest selfishness. We are not told that this Company governed in the East for two centuries, and that the present system owes nothing to it but the extent of territory in which it is applied: an expansion fatal to the Company, to which it was led by the spirit of commercial greed in as naked and unscrupulous a form as was ever witnessed, and which involved the wholesale destruction of spice-trees in all but one or two islands so small as to be easily guarded by the Company. It is this "abolition of the spice trade in the Moluccas" which Mr. Wallace calls "actually beneficial to the inhabitants," and "an act both wise in itself and morally and politically justifiable." And his language will not appear as strong as it is unless we consider the immense amount of bloodshed which was the price of this policy before it could be established, or when we compare it with the following passage from Bickmore, in his account of the Banda isles:

"During this long contest the natives are said to have lost three thousand killed and a thousand prisoners, or more than a fourth part of what has been stated as their whole number when the Dutch arrived. All who were left alive fled to the neighboring islands, and not a vestige of their language or peculiar customs is known to exist at the present time. The Dutch were thus left sole possessors of the coveted prize, but there were no natives to cultivate the nutmeg trees, and they were therefore obliged to import slaves to do their labor. When slavery was abolished [1859] in the Dutch possessions, convicts were sent from Java to make up the deficiency, and at this time there are about three thousand of them in all these islands. They are a most villanous-looking set, and have nearly all been guilty of the bloodiest crimes. They are obliged to wear around the neck a large iron ring, weighing a pound or a pound and a half."

Mr. Wallace, however, regrets to have learned that "since leaving the country, this monopoly [of the nutmeg trade] has been partially or wholly discontinued, a proceeding which appears exceedingly injudicious and quite unnecessary." He rather naively remarks, as a reason, that "a small country like Holland cannot afford to keep distant and expensive colonies at a loss"—and he seems actually to suppose that the monopoly might have been abandoned while it still paid, and because of a mistaken sentiment against it! It is notorious that the monopoly had practically ceased to exist, and that the revenues of the Spice Islands had long been falling short of their expenses, owing to competition that could not be overcome, when the Government decided to abolish the monopoly inherited from the East India Company.

While we fail to share our author's views of a monopoly begun in violence and confirmed by despotism, and ending appropriately in bankruptcy, neither can we wholly accept his reasoning in favor of the Dutch *corvée*, however admirable its workings and however adapted to the genius of the Malays. He says that the latter are merely undergoing one of the stages which every civilized people has passed through, though not always under such favorable auspices. Ten years ago, however, the same thing could have been said as truly in defence of slavery, not only the mild sort tolerated in the Archipelago, but the infinitely brutal and cruel slavery (of a less vindictive race) of the Trans-Vaal and Guiana. We think, therefore, that Mr. Wallace would have done better to put aside *a priori* arguments, in favor of those drawn from experience of the latter days of the Dutch rule—such, for example, as those already referred to, furnished by the astonishing improvements in Java and the Minahasa. These he should have sought in the history of the Dutch Colonies during the past fifty years—the period of such great administrators as Van der Capellen, Van den Bosch, and Rochussen, who respectively invented the existing official subordination, substituted the *corvée* for direct taxes, and firmly settled the hold of Holland upon the smaller islands in her East Indian domain. Over the period occupied by the East India Company it is most convenient to draw a veil, and worse than useless to make it seem respectable by proving England's Indian history even more disreputable and tyrannical. Let the dead past bury its dead, and let us start afresh with only one datum: *The Dutch are here.* The superior is in contact, as master, with the inferior. For such a state of things is liberty or a modified despotism, is protection or free trade, the wiser and humaner policy? Is political economy the science of mixed, or only of co-ordinate, civilizations? Here the author is upon solid ground, and his conclusions we believe to be in the main correct. We shall not dwell upon this topic,

but shall simply remark that it is worth all the attention which his readers can give it.
