

## L I T E R A T U R E .

THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO: the Land of the Ourang-Utan, and the Bird of Paradise. A narrative of Travel, with studies of Man and Nature. BY ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE. In two vols. London: *Macmillan and Co.* 1869.

Dedicated to Charles Darwin, author of "The Origin of Species," possessing information, as varied as interesting, and containing thirty-one illustrations, with nine maps, this work demands attention from almost every class of reader.

The main object the author had in view was to obtain specimens of natural history, for his private collection, for museums, and for amateurs. Absent from England eight years, he calculates that, setting aside the fourteen thousand miles within the Archipelago, making sixty or seventy separate journeyings each involving preparation and loss of time, six were spent in collecting, an idea being gained of his ceaseless assiduity from the fact that he obtained no less than 310 specimens of mammalia, 100 of reptiles, 8,050 of birds, besides 170,000 others of one sort and another.

The Malay Archipelago extends for more than 4,000 miles from east to west, and is about 1,300 in breadth from north to south, and as it is pronounced to be the least known part of the globe, that circumstance alone renders this book—containing the researches of a scientific and intellectual man—highly attractive.

We could have wished to have said a few words relative to the physical geography of the Archipelago and the islands; but having alluded to the extent by mileage, let us just partially indicate that extent by comparative data. It includes, we learn, three islands larger than Great Britain, and in one of them, Borneo, "the whole of the British Isles might be set down, and would be surrounded by a sea of forests." New Guinea is probably larger than Borneo; Sumatra about the size of Great Britain; Java, Luxon, and Celebes each about the size of Ireland; eighteen islands are, on the average, the size of Jamaica; more than a hundred as large as the Isle of Wight; isles and islets of smaller size being innumerable.

Many of our readers must have heard of the celebrated fish-pond at St. Petersburg, the carp in which will rise on the sound of a bell to the surface, and seize bread or biscuit from the hands of visitors. When at Lombock, an island situated at the east end of Java, an excursion was made to a place called Gunong Sari, where a large fish-pond was seen, supplied by a little rivulet which entered it out of the mouth of a gigantic crocodile, well executed in brick and stone, a fantastic and picturesque pavilion ornamented with grotesque statues rising in the centre. The pond was well stocked with fine fish, which came every morning to be fed at the sound of a wooden gong which is hung near for the purpose. On striking it a number of fish immediately came out of the masses of weed with which the pond abounds, and followed along the margin expecting food. At the same time some deer

came out of the adjacent wood, which, from being seldom shot at and regularly fed, are almost tame.

Here is a snake story: "One night about nine o'clock," says the author, "I heard a curious noise and rustling overhead, as if some heavy animal were crawling slowly over the thatch. The noise soon ceased, and I thought no more about it and went to bed soon afterwards. The next afternoon just before dinner, being rather tired with my day's work, I was lying on the couch with a book in my hand, when gazing upwards I saw a large mass of something overhead which I had not noticed before. Looking more carefully I could see yellow and black marks, and thought it must be a tortoise-shell put up there out of the way between the ridge pole and the roof. Continuing to gaze, it suddenly resolved itself into a large snake, compactly coiled up in a kind of knot; and I could detect his head and his bright eyes in the very centre of the folds. The noise of the evening before was now explained. A python had climbed up one of the posts of the house, and had made his way under the thatch within a yard of my head, and taken up a comfortable position in the roof; and I had slept soundly all night directly under him. I called to my two boys who were skinning birds below, and said, 'Here's a big snake in the roof;' but as soon as I had shown it to them they rushed out of the house and begged me to come out directly. Finding they were too much afraid to do anything, we called some of the labourers in the plantation, and soon had half-a-dozen men in consultation outside. One of these, a native of Bouru, where there are a great many snakes, said he would get him out, and proceeded to work in a business-like manner. He made a strong noose of rattan, and with a long pole in the other hand poked at the snake, who then began slowly to uncoil itself. He then managed to slip the noose over its head, and getting it well on to the body, dragged the animal down. There was a great scuffle as the snake coiled round the chairs and posts to resist the enemy, but at length the man caught hold of the tail, rushed out of the house (running so quick that the creature seemed quite confounded), and tried to strike its head against a tree. He missed, however, and let go, and the snake got under a dead trunk close by. It was again poked out, and again the Bouru man caught hold of its tail, and running away quickly dashed its head with a swing against a tree, and it was then easily killed with a hatchet." It was about twelve feet long, very thick, and capable of doing much mischief—could have swallowed a dog or child.

The ourang-utan is not a carnivorous animal, and like most others will retreat rather than show fight, unless compelled to do so in self-defence or in anger or retaliation, when he becomes a formidable antagonist. A large one being seen by some Dyaks feeding upon the young shoots of a palm by the river side, he made off to the jungle, the people with spears and choppers after him. The man who first came up with him endeavoured to run him through, but the ourang, seizing the spear with his hands, in an instant got the man's arm in his mouth, making his teeth meet in the flesh above the elbow, which he tore dreadfully, but the poor fellow's companions coming up the ourang was killed. The man who was lacerated by its fangs was ill for a long while, and never fully recovered the use of his arm.

The strength of hand and finger of the mias or orang-utan must be immense; its favourite fruit is that of the durian, and the animal destroys great quantities, though, strange to say, if clearing in the forest happen to intervene it will not attempt to get across at it. The fruit which is very delicious lies within an exceedingly thick case covered with strong conical spines or spikes; however, he contrives to make a hole, and then by sheer force tears it open. With two exceptions, the mias is never attacked by any other animal, and the author gives verbatim particulars received by him from old Dyak chiefs who had passed their lives in places where the brute is most abundant. One of these said, "No animal is strong enough to hurt the mias, and the only creature he ever fights with is the crocodile." When there is no fruit in the jungle, he goes to seek food on the banks of the river, where there are plenty of young shoots that he likes, and fruits that grow close to the water. Then it is the crocodile sometimes tries to seize him, but the mias gets upon him, and beats him with his hands and feet, and tearing at him kills him. The Orang Kaya, or chief of the Balow Dyaks, declared "the mias has no enemies; no animals dare attack it, but the crocodile and the python. He always kills the crocodile by main strength, standing upon it, pulling open its jaws, and ripping up its throat. If a python attacks a mias, he seizes it with his hands, and then bites it, and soon kills it." "The mias," he added, "is very strong; there is no animal in the jungle so strong as he."

Mr. Wallace adverts to the remarkable fact that an animal so large and of such a high type of form as the ourang-utan should be confined to so limited a district as that in which it is found, and then proceeds to comment upon the size attributed to the beast, the actual height being deceptive, as it never walks in an upright position. We have alluded to the powerful character of the hand and fingers, so let the reader conceive what the grasp must be from arms which outstretched will measure from seven feet to seven feet eight inches, Mr. St. John, in his "Life in the Forests of the Far East," mentioning an orang, shot by a friend of his, with an arm measuring seventeen inches in girth, and wrist, twelve. Dr. Clarke Abel describes the skin of an orang, which the captain and crew who killed the creature declared looked so gigantic that they thought it was seven feet high, though they found on measuring it when dead that it was only about six feet. Mr. Wallace queries many of the measurements, and his opinion is of considerable weight, seventeen bodies freshly slain of orangs having been carefully tested by him. He is inclined to believe, however, that the length and strength of the arms, and the width of the face continue increasing to a very great age.

When Richard Hakluyt, in the reign of Her Most Excellent Majesty Queen Elizabeth, visited his cousin of the Middle Temple "and found lying open vpon his boord certaine bookes of Cosmographie with an vniversall Mappe," so deep an impression was made upon him by what he read and had explained to him, that he resolved by God's assistance to prosecute the special knowledge and kind of literature relating to travel so happily by chance brought to his notice, and most nobly in after years he carried out his determination. If in these the days of our gracious Queen Victoria Hakluyt could have risen, "with

what singular delight he would have bene, as it were, ravished in beholding" innumerable books of travel and maps, and this though "he meddled with the navigations onely of our owne nation." Such works are legion, and amongst them stand out prominently for remarkable details pages like these, a further notice of which we regret being unable to give.