

Transcription, January 2015:

*Literary World* (Boston) 9(4) (1 Sept. 1878): 57c-58a (anon.).

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‘*Tropical Nature*. By Alfred Russel Wallace. [Macmillan & Co.]’

Mr. Wallace, who is a distinguished English naturalist, has had twelve years’ experience of the eastern and western tropics of the equatorial zone. A diligent student of the observations of others, he has made most careful observations himself, and a summary of these is given in this large and finely-printed volume. Its value to all who

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are engaged in the study of the out-door world is obvious, but its interest for any thoughtful reader, who has an appetite for a knowledge of the world he lives in, is quite as great. Mr. Wallace writes with professional simplicity, yet with charming effect, and often with an unpretending eloquence of the highest type. Three opening chapters treat respectively of the climate and general aspects of the equatorial zone, of tropical vegetation, and of the animal life which it envelops. The fourth, an extremely delightful chapter, is occupied exclusively with the humming birds, which constitute a conspicuous feature of tropical forests, and of which, it will surprise the reader to learn, there are not less than four hundred distinct species. The description of these beautiful creatures, of their haunts and habits, affords a novel glimpse of forest life. In a fifth and sixth chapters the colors of animals and plants are considered with reference to sexual selection and the origin of the color sense. A seventh and eight chapters relate to the effects on living things of their environments, to the indications of the extreme antiquity of man, and to the bearing of the distribution of animal life upon the law and fact of geographical changes. In the last chapter but one some use is made of American antiquities. The pages throughout abound with brilliant descriptions of tropical scenery, and with curious information upon a great variety of points, such as the brief twilight in the tropics, the comparative scarcity of flowers, the plentifulness of butterflies, the probable use of the horns of beetles, the protective function of the colors of plants and animals, etc., etc. Mr. Wallace’s style is calm and elevated, as well befits the subject, and while he is a theorist, he writes as an observer should, his opinions always waiting upon his researches. As a description, distinctively and by itself, of tropical nature in all its varied forms and almost infinite luxuriance, we can assure the reader of the singular power and fascination of the volume.

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*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2015.