

Literature.

RECENT BOOKS OF TRAVEL.

*Travels in the East Indian Archipelago.* By ALBERT S. BICKMORE, M.A. With Maps and Illustrations. Jno. Murray, 1868.

*Travel and Adventure in the Territory of Alaska.* By FREDERICK WHYMPER. With Map and Illustrations. Jno. Murray, 1868.

*The Travels of a Hindoo to various parts of Bengal and Upper India.* By BHOLANATH CHUNDER. With an Introduction by J. TALBOYS WHEELER Esq. 2 vols. Trübner and Co., 1869.

Mr. Bickmore, an American by birth, and a Professor of Natural History in Madison University, Hamilton, New York, records in this goodly volume his experiences as a naturalist among the famous spice islands of the Eastern Archipelago. It seems that his object in the first instance was to obtain at Amboina the shells figured in Rumphius's *Rarikot Kamer*, and that with the friendly assistance of the Governor of the Netherlands India he afterwards travelled over every part of the archipelago. The result is a valuable and weighty work, not very lively indeed, but full of interesting facts, and sufficiently readable to attract the attention of the non-scientific reader. To those who seek for knowledge rather than amusement, and who wish for accurate information with regard to the far-famed spice islands, this volume will prove of essential service. Moreover, the distinct purpose of the writer gives a value to his work which compensates for the lack of literary art.

Most men of science are modest, and as a scientific professor Mr. Bickmore is no exception to the rule; but in things apart from his calling modesty sometimes fails him. Thus, instead of leaving us to discover that he is courageous, he is apt to make the proofs of his pluck somewhat too conspicuous. Mr. Bickmore served in the Union army, and is careful to tell us that, having been in battle, he is not likely to become frightened without very good cause for it, and in his graphic narrative of a struggle with a python there is a certain consciousness of courage which it would have been wiser to suppress. In indifferent English he says, "The thought of escaping while I could, and leave for others to do what belonged to me, never entered my mind."

This, however, is a trifling objection, and does not affect the worth of Mr. Bickmore's volume, which, as we have hinted, consists in an array of well-digested facts. As in most tropical countries, life in the beautiful islands of the Eastern Archipelago has a thousand drawbacks. You may be destroyed by an earthquake, or killed by snakes, or bitten almost to death by mosquitoes, crunched by a crocodile if you attempt to bathe, or awake one morning to find all your household treasures ruined by white ants, and if this is not enough there is generally the chance, and in many places the certainty, of fever and dysentery. In some parts, too, Mr. Bickmore met with cases of leprosy in its most revolting form, but he observes that in the course of his travels he heard of only one European suffering from this hideous maledy.

Mr. Bickmore's enthusiasm is chiefly expended upon shells and other objects of natural history, but his volume contains a number of curious details, which show that he did not willingly allow anything to escape his observation. Some of these it may be interesting to group together without any attempt at classification. They will show at least that the volume is not destitute of variety.

Of Malay cooking he entertains no high opinion, and of Malay servants he observes—and the remark holds good at home as well as abroad—that the more you employ the greater is the amount of your trouble. "No servant will do more than one thing. If engaged as a nurse, it is only to care for one child; if as a groom, it is only to care for one horse, or at most one span of horses." In the forests of South America the Indians sleep in hammocks to avoid the danger of snakes; in Amboina, for the same reason, the natives perch their beds upon poles. As there are no horses in the island, the traveller journeys in a chair, to which several coolies were attached, who relieve each other every few minutes. "Their ragged clothing and uncombed hair made them appear strangely out of keeping with the luxuriant vegetation surrounding us." Mr. Bickmore gives an interesting account of the spice which makes these islands so famous. In Amboina the clove

is not expected to bear fruit before its twelfth or fifteenth year, and it ceases to yield when about seventy-five years old. The clove is the flower-bud, and grows in clusters. "When the buds are young, they are nearly white; afterwards they change to a light green, and finally to a bright red, when they must at once be gathered, which is done by picking them by hand, or beating them off with bamboos on to cloths spread beneath the trees. They are then simply dried in the sun, and are ready for the market. In drying their colour is changed from red to black, the condition in which we see them." Strangely enough the natives make no use of this condiment themselves, except in forming models of their bamboo huts.

One notable and annoying peculiarity is the variety of dialects spoken by the natives, so that villagers within a mile of each other are sometimes actually unable to converse. The result is that all who wish to carry on trade or intercourse with their neighbours are compelled to learn Malay, which is as useful as Latin was upon the continent in years gone by. It was in Malay that Mr. Bickmore carried on his trading as a shell collector, and an eager, exciting traffic it was. "To give the trade more *éclat*," he writes, "I took a good quantity of small copper coins, and distributed them freely among the children as I passed along. The result of this manoeuvre was most magical; everybody was anxious to make my acquaintance and sell me shells." Mr. Bickmore is apparently wholly free from what may be called romantic tendencies. The female beauties of the islands had no attractions for him, and on being asked to a ball, which he attended as a matter of politeness, he left after the first waltz, observing that the prospect of a ramble along the shores on the morrow had for him a far greater fascination than whirling till he was giddy, "half embraced in the arms of one of those dark belles." All the more amusing, therefore, is the traveller's account of the unexpected treatment he received one day at a banquet. The story is not long, and is worth telling.

Our bill of fare was sufficient to satisfy the most fastidious epicure: for substantial diet the neighbouring forests had furnished us with an abundance of venison and the meat of the wild boar, and the adjoining bays had yielded several kinds of nice fish. All was prepared in an unexceptional manner, and the rich display of pineapples, mangoes, dukus, and several kinds of bananas was finer than many a European prince could set before his guests. The process of demolishing had fully begun, when the dark beauties, who had been dancing before the house, came in, and ranged themselves round the table. My first impression was, that they had come in to see how Europeans eat, and I only refrained from hinting to that effect to the Resident on my right, because he had already smiled to see my surprise at our novel reception, and besides, I was anxious not to appear to be wholly ignorant of their odd customs. Soon they began to sing, and this, I thought to myself, is probably what is meant by a sumptuous banquet in the East, and, if so, it well deserves the name. As the song continued, one after another took out a handkerchief of spotless white, and folding it into a triangular form, began to fan the gentleman in front of her. This is indeed Eastern luxury, I said to myself, and while I was wondering what would come next, the damsel behind the Resident reached forward and gave him a loud kiss on his cheek. "That was intended as an appetizer, I presume?" *Natuurlijk*, "Of course," he replied, and I leaned back in my chair, to give way to a hearty laugh, which I had been trying for a long time to restrain, when suddenly I was astonished by a similar salutation on the lips! It was done so quickly that I had no time to recover from my bewildering surprise, and coolly explain that such was not the custom in my land. Instead of my laughing, at the Resident's expense, the whole party laughed at mine; but my confusion was dispelled by the assurance of all that even the Governor-General himself had to submit to such treatment when he came to inspect these islands. Besides, I was made aware that the fault was largely my own, and that, when I leaned backward to laugh, the fair one behind me had misinterpreted the movement as a challenge (which she certainly seemed not loath to accept). At every village we had to run a similar gauntlet, and I must confess that several times it occurred to me that the youngest member of the party certainly received his share of such tender attention, and that many of these beauties, *nona itum*, were determined to improve their present opportunity for fear that they might never again have the privilege of kissing a gentleman with a white face.

With this extract we must conclude our brief notice of a work which will prove an important and indispensable addition to all libraries of natural history. It is curious that although issued from Albemarle-street, and in a style worthy of the house, the mode of spelling common in the United States has been retained throughout. Mr. Bickmore dates his preface from Cambridge, Massachusetts, but gives no hint of an intention to publish an American edition of the volume.

Where is Alaska? may very possibly be the ex-

clamation of some readers on seeing the title of Mr. Whympers volume. Alaska, then, be it known, is the territory once called Russian America, but which was formally transferred to the United States authorities on October 18, 1867. Of this country, Sitka, which is the capital and as yet the only city, enjoys the reputation of being about the most rainy place in the world. Since the American occupation a little stir has been given to trade, but Mr. Whympers laughs at the nonsense recorded in some of the United States newspapers with regard to its agricultural resources, and observes that there is not an acre of grain in the whole country. The purchase of the 400,000 square miles which comprise Alaska was the work of Mr. Seward, and took the Americans by surprise. Great was the opposition and great the ridicule caused by the announcement. "Mock advertisements, purporting to come from the Secretary of State, appeared in the daily papers of New York and the large cities generally, offering the highest price for 'waste lands and worn-out colonies,' submerged and undiscovered islands, icebergs, Polar bears, volcanoes and earthquakes, provided they should not shake the confidence of the State department." The fact is, says Mr. Whympers, ignorance with regard to the colony was, and is, almost universal, and this work "must be regarded simply as an early and superficial contribution to our better knowledge of it."

So far from being superficial, however, it is an admirable work, written with as much spirit as accuracy, and relating the experience not of months only, but of years. Mr. Whympers, as he records many a long voyage and many an interesting exploration. Of places well known as well as of places scarcely known at all, has always something intelligent to say, and being an artist, as well as a traveller, his illustrations afford a vivid representation of the scenes which he describes. Of Vancouver's Island, where he spent three winters, his account is as graphic as any we have met with; and it is interesting to note that his opinion with regard to the aborigines coincides with that held by Sir Francis Head, by Mr. Catlin, and more recently by Mr. Wentworth Dilke. "The least degraded Indians," he says, "are those who have least to do with the white man;" and he remarks that Catlin concisely summed up our relations with the red men when he said, "White men, whiskey, tomakawks, scalp-knives, guns, powder and ball, small-pox, debauchery, extermination. In Kamohatka, by the way, Mr. Whympers throws out an original suggestion when he observes that "the attractions of the country for the Alpine climber cannot be over-stated." The loftiest mountain, known by the name of Klutchevskoi, is 16,000 feet in height. And he gives a very lively description of Petropaulovski in its brief summer garb, with the thermometer at 80 degrees in the shade. "The weather was perfect, there was scarcely a ripple on the blue water below us, flowers made the air fragrant, and but for an occasional mosquito we should have forgotten we were on earth at all! And then—bliss of blisses!—we not merely raised a cloud of balmy smoke, but were encouraged therein by the sanction of our lady friends, some of whom joined us. At all their entertainments, or at quieter family parties, cigars and cigarettes were always served with the tea and coffee, and the ladies retained their seats with us. Would it were so in our own otherwise more or less happy land." The most valuable portion of Mr. Whympers work relates to his sledge journey to the Yukou, which has all the freshness of a traveller's narrative in a land generally unknown. Cold work it must have been, for Mr. Whympers observes they had every morning to break up the clotted ice formed on their faces, and that a merchant whom he knew very narrowly escaped suffocation from the ice forming in this way on his beard and moustache. At Nulato, the most northern of the Russian Fur Company's posts, where Mr. Whympers spent a winter, the temperature was often thirty degrees below zero, and the days were about two hours in length. There was plenty of interest notwithstanding, and many a lively anecdote is related by the frozen up artist, who was forced to sketch under difficulties. "Between every five strokes of the pencil, I ran about to exercise myself, or went into our quarters for warmth. Several times I skinned my fingers, once froze my left ear, which swelled up nearly to the top of my head, and I was always afraid that my prominent nasal organ would get bitten." The Indians appear to have been uniformly friendly, and Mr. Whympers relates a circumstance which redounds greatly to their credit.

We left the "Versola Sofka" on the morning of the 7th, and finding the loads too great for our dogs under the circumstances, we raised an erection of poles, and deposited some bags thereon. I may here say, once for all, that our men often left goods, consisting of tea, flour, molasses, bacon, and all kinds of miscellaneous items, scattered in this way over the country, and that they remained untouched by the Indians, who frequently travelled past them.

We have only space to notice in a few words "The Travels of a Hindoo." It is a most significant work, not so much for the information it contains—though this is considerable—as for the views expressed by the author, who is dead-set against the Brahmins, and believes that the spread of European, or rather of English civilisation, will effect an entire revolution in the country. The Hindoo's knowledge of English is remarkable. His book, although not pure English, is a valuable work, and those who wish for a wider knowledge of the relations in which we stand to the great Eastern country we undertake to govern will do well to study it with care.